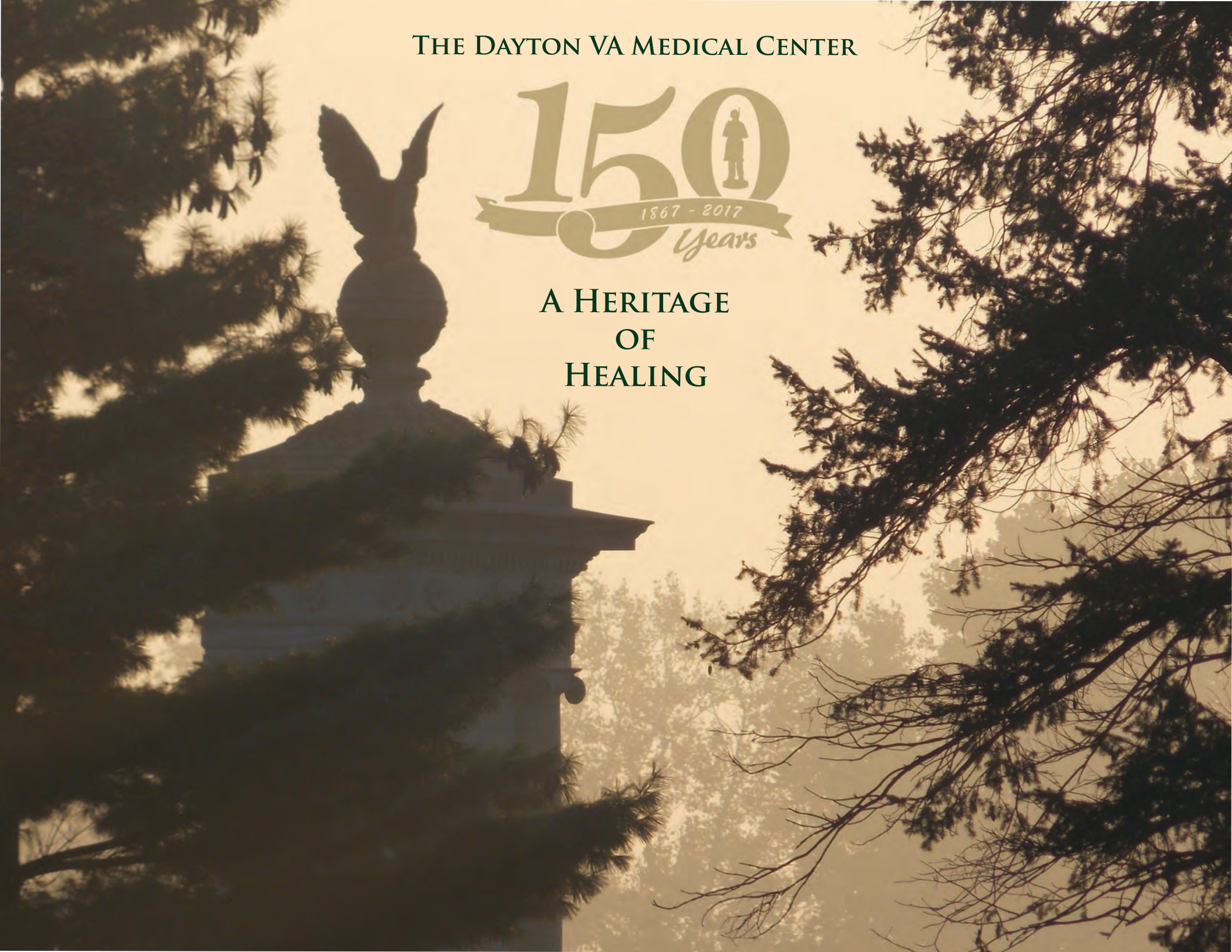

The Dayton VA Medical Center

150
1867 - 2017
Years

A Heritage of Healing

The Dayton VA Medical Center

150 Years

A Heritage of Healing

Written and Designed

by Tessa Kalman

Edited by

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Published by The Dayton VA Medical Center
2017


1867 - 2017
150 Years
Dayton VA
MEDICAL CENTER
A National Historic
Landmark

Dedication

To honor the Dayton VA Medical Center's 150th Anniversary, this book was written to provide a rich historical account of one of the original three "Soldiers Homes" created to serve our nation's Veterans. Throughout the book, we feature Our Veterans' Voices—stories shared with us in order to provide insight into the lives of service members and to help us deliver quality health care to them once they have left service.

Through the decades of our history, the priority has always been to serve our Veterans who have so valiantly served our nation; from the immediate days following the Civil War through today's ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and around the world. During this time, we have seen changes in the needs of our Veterans—needs we've met with welcoming arms, a listening ear, and comprehensive health care shaped especially for the unique requirements of our former military.

We thank the men and women who work hard to make our Veterans feel at home, for instance: the physician whose diagnostic skill and knowledge promotes healing; the nurse responding to a patient's call for help; the housekeeper ensuring a clean environment where care can be delivered safely. These people and those who support them make the Dayton VA Medical Center a leader in Veterans' health care today and assure leadership into the future.

Pollinator Habitat Poppy Field
Photo by Tessa Kalman

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A Letter from The Director

What you are about to read is a story more than 150 years in the making.

This is a story that begins with President Abraham Lincoln—in the immediate wake of the American Civil War and just a month prior to his assassination—calling on our nation to "care for him who shall have borne the battle." This is a story that continues today, more than 150 years later. And, in truth, this is a story that has no end. For as long as our nation has heroes, they will need someone to help heal their wounds, both physical and otherwise.

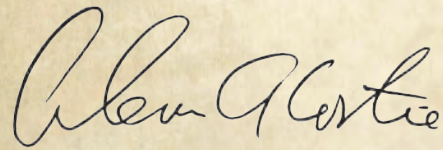
And if our nation's history thus far has told us anything, it is that the United States of America will always have heroes.

As Director and CEO of the Dayton VA Medical Center, it has been my honor and greatest privilege to do my part in upholding President Abraham Lincoln's promise, just as my predecessors did when they opened our doors in 1867. But I did not do it alone; I have been joined at every turn by incredible staff dedicated to serving our Veterans. And I have found that same dedication from the Dayton community as well, just as my predecessors did 150 years ago.

But at its core, this is a story about Veterans. It's a story about the Veterans who built this campus, often the very same Veterans who were receiving care here, and it's a story of the Veterans continuing that tradition today, as they receive care while also working and/or volunteering here. Because Veterans look out for each other—they are trained to never leave a man behind—they have always been the true power behind the Dayton VA Medical Center. That has been the secret to our success for the past 150 years, and I expect that will continue to be the secret to our success in the future.

To the Veterans of 150 years ago, the Veterans and Service Members of today, and those yet to come: thank you for everything you have done to help us uphold President Abraham Lincoln's promise.

And thank you for letting me be a part of your story.



Glenn A. Costie, *CEO/Director*
Dayton VA Medical Center

Photo: Tessa Kalman

Our Veterans' Voices

The history of military service and Veterans' experiences are best told through the voices of the Veterans themselves. They provide us with valuable insight and help shape the way we deliver health care. During the compilation of this book, we interviewed Veterans in the Dayton community to learn about their life experiences and their views of the VA. As you read their stories, we hope you may be reminded of the importance of giving back to those who have given so much for their country.

"I had a badly injured leg and I was worried because this was the time where the military would just **patch you up, amputate, and move on.** I may have told a few "untruths" because ***I wasn't going to lose my leg."***

I asked questions about **the number of hostages** in the building, the hostage takers, and **if anyone had been killed?** It was quiet for about a minute. The SP looked up from his sniper rifle and said, **"Sir, you do know this is just an exercise, right?"**

The Japanese attack came in the morning hours and I was awakened to such horrific sounds that I asked myself if this was the end of the world – *was this Armageddon?*

"Many Marines were lost to frostbite and gangrene from the elements. **It broke my heart to help load my brethren's bodies into trucks** to move them from the Reservoir."

" I lost my best friend in February of 1969. **This hardened my heart towards ever making friends again and I put a wall up.** There were men I worked side by side with and I didn't want to even know their names."

"It is important for women to link arms and help each other instead of competing against each other. ***We are so much more powerful together than standing alone."***

"The accident fractured my spine *in 19 places and I could not walk for 6 months. When I could finally walk again, I was ready to get back into the cockpit."*

"Each officer had a Vietnamese officer who was his "counterpart." My counterpart was an older Vietnamese lieutenant whose first question was **"how old are you?"** "Twenty-three," I answered. He told me ***he'd been fighting longer than I'd been alive!"***

"I developed a work program to shift the attitude away from being purely punitive and more towards **having a positive outcome** for the prisoners. My idea was to build on the discipline they learned in the military and *give them a sense of pride."*

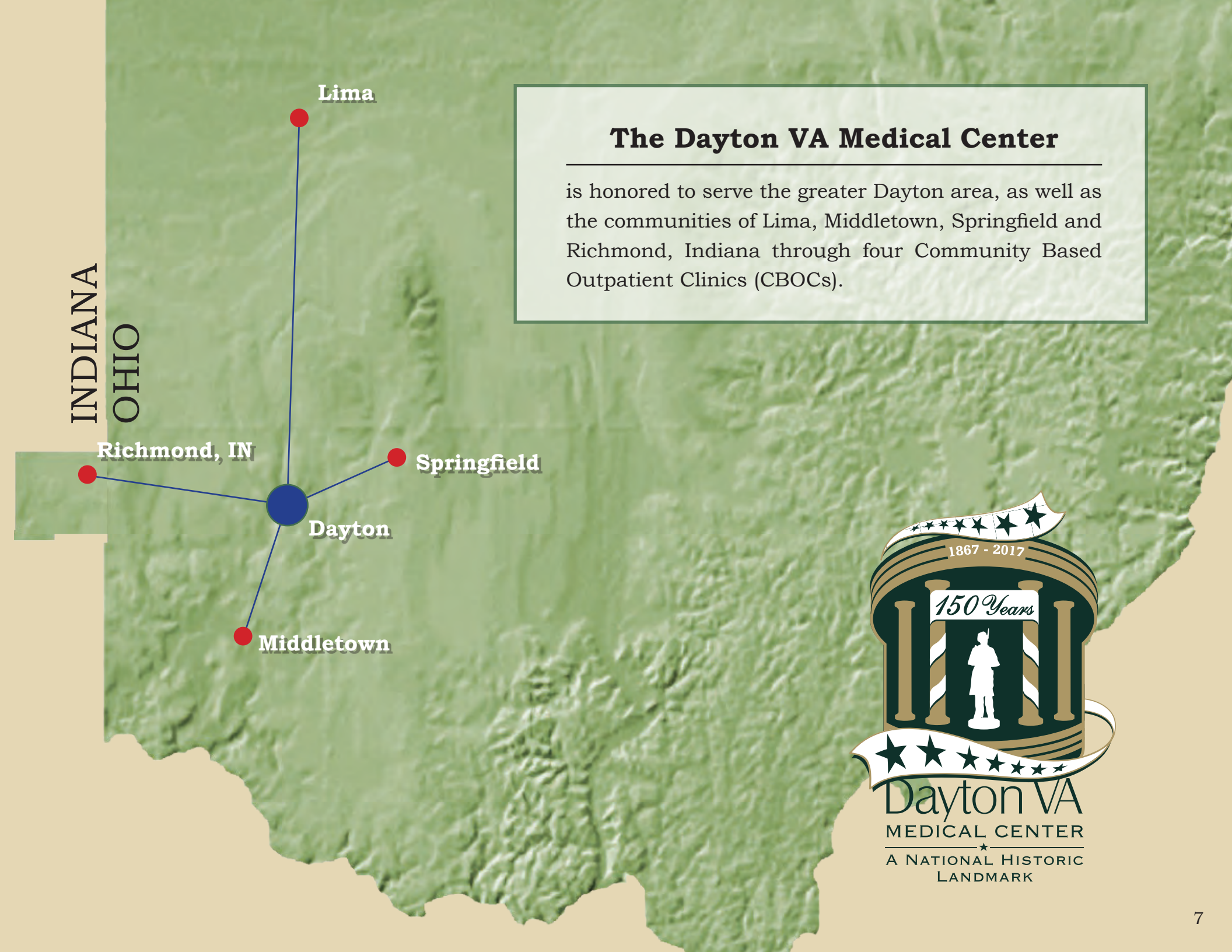
The Dayton VA Medical Center

This medical facility and National Historic Landmark is situated on 382 acres about 3 miles from downtown Dayton, Ohio. As an internationally-recognized leader in Relationship-Based Care, we model the concept that the success of a patient's experience with our health care team is directly tied to the quality of our relationships: to our patients and their families, to our fellow co-workers, and to ourselves.

The Dayton VA campus not only serves Dayton-area Veterans, but it also brings care to a 17-county wide area via four community outpatient clinics located in Lima, Springfield, Middletown, Ohio and Richmond, Indiana. Over 750,000 outpatient medical visits are conducted every year, and care is provided to 5,000 inpatients annually.

The main hospital building featuring the 1930-era portico, housing the statue of a Civil War soldier named "Private Fair". Before 1992, the statue resided at the Soldiers Monument in downtown Dayton.

The Dayton VA Medical Center was established in 1865 and opened to serve our first Civil War Veterans in 1867 as a residential care facility. It has evolved to encompass a wide range of care and services for modern-day Veterans and their unique health care needs. The mission of the medical center is to serve our Veterans through compassionate, innovative, comprehensive, accessible and quality patient care in a safe and supportive environment– all while promoting excellence in research and education. The Dayton VA Medical Center is a teaching hospital, affiliated with the Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine and provides a full range of patient services, as well as education and research opportunities for our resident physicians, fellows, medical and nursing students. Comprehensive patient care includes the areas of internal medicine, surgery, neurology, oncology, dentistry, rehabilitation, mental health, geriatrics and extended care, to name a few.



The Dayton VA Medical Center

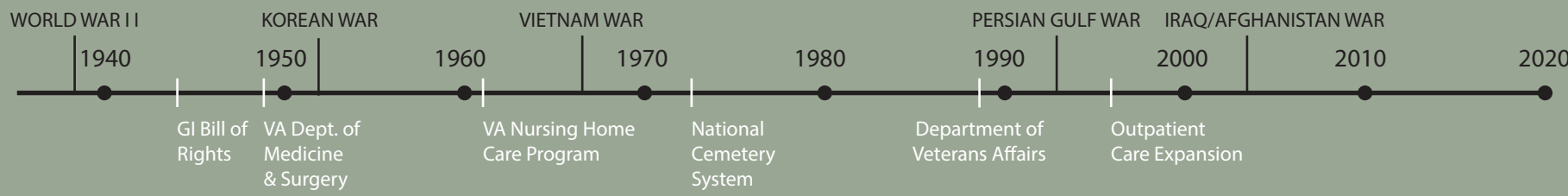
is honored to serve the greater Dayton area, as well as the communities of Lima, Middletown, Springfield and Richmond, Indiana through four Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

1867 - 2017
150 Years
Dayton VA
MEDICAL CENTER
A National Historic Landmark

History of VA

In 2017. the Dayton VA Medical Center celebrated its 150th anniversary. The concept that gave rise to this modern-day health care facility can trace its roots to the earliest days of our country. For example, due to war with the Pequot Indians in 1636, the Pilgrims of Plymouth enacted a law that placed their disabled Veterans under the care of the colony. Since that time, America has strived to uphold the core belief that we as a country should attend to the health and well-being of Veterans who have served and sacrificed in order to protect us all.

The idea of how best to accomplish this goal varied throughout history, and Veterans' benefits took many different forms as a result. Land grants were used as incentives to encourage enlistments during and after the Revolutionary War. In 1833 the Navy opened a facility in Philadelphia for its Veterans, the United States Sailors' Home, and that same year the federal Bureau of Pensions was formed to provide cash payments to ex-military members.



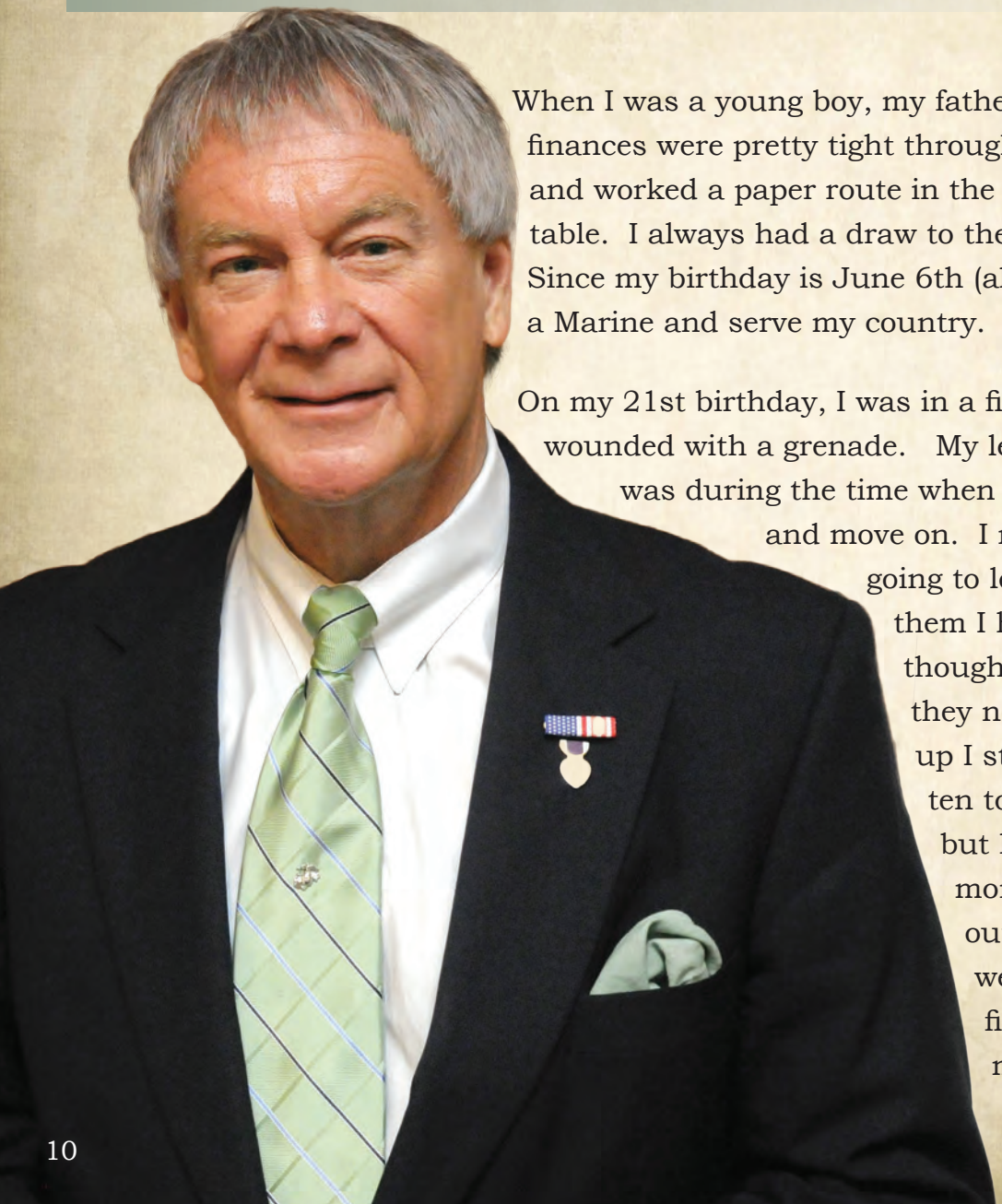
1851 brought the organization of the United States Soldiers' Home in Washington, D.C. This facility was for Veterans of the Regular Army and was paid for through contributions from soldiers' salaries. After the Civil War, the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was formed to offer sanctuary for honorably discharged volunteer forces of the Union Army. States also established "soldiers' homes" to shelter homeless and disabled Veterans after the war. (This type of sheltering would later be known as "domiciliary care".)

A new system of Veterans' benefits became available as the United States entered into World War I in 1917. In addition to existing medical and domiciliary care, these included disability compensation, life and disability insurance, and vocational rehabilitation. These were overseen by a confusing array of agencies including: the United States Public Health Service, the Bureau of Pensions, the War Risk Insurance Bureau, the Federal Board for Vocational Rehabilitation, and the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. 1921 brought the first consolidation of Veteran agencies. The WWI programs were brought together to form the Veterans Bureau, and in 1930 the National Home system and the Pension Bureau joined it to become the Veterans Administration (VA) under President Herbert Hoover. Administration of many Veterans' cemeteries overseen by the Army was transferred to the VA in 1973. The next major change came in 1989 when the VA was elevated to become the 14th Presidential Cabinet agency and was renamed the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our Veterans' Voices

John Agenbroad

U.S. Marine Corps, Vietnam War Veteran, Purple Heart Recipient



When I was a young boy, my father passed away and I was raised by my mother. Our finances were pretty tight throughout my childhood. I went to school, played sports, and worked a paper route in the mornings and evenings to try to bring money to the table. I always had a draw to the Marine Corps—I went in the Marine Corps in 1966. Since my birthday is June 6th (also known as "D-Day"), I felt I was destined to become a Marine and serve my country.

On my 21st birthday, I was in a fire fight outside of Hue City, Vietnam, where I was wounded with a grenade. My leg was badly injured. I was worried, because this was during the time when the military would just patch you up, amputate, and move on. I may have told a few "untruths" because I wasn't going to lose my leg. They wouldn't perform surgery if I told them I had eaten, so that is what I said. I'm sure the doctor thought I was too wounded to have enjoyed a meal, but they noted it and moved on. I passed out, and when I woke up I struggled to look down so I could be sure I still had ten toes. At one point, I was given a blood transfusion but had a reaction to the blood. I didn't eat for three months and went down to skin and bones. It turned out I was given the wrong blood type, and my vitals were beginning to shut down. Once they caught it, I finally got well and was moved to Guam. I spent three months there and was sent out to various hospitals

where I had numerous surgeries, as well as skin graft after skin graft. I spent the next thirteen months in various VA hospitals across the country. After all that, I was sent to the Dayton VA Medical Center which ended up being my home away from home. It was there that I met the doctor who would do wonders and put me back together. I was nicknamed "The Bionic Man" because I had gone through so many surgeries.

My mother was at my side around the clock and ended up being my lifeline during this time. She told me I needed counseling for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). I had been put back together physically, but spiritually and mentally, I needed mending as well. I was probably at the Dayton VA Medical Center for six of the thirteen months I was in and out of hospitals. During that time, they put me back together physically, spiritually and mentally. Some of my buddies were not able to cope with the things they had to do in Vietnam to stay alive. I saw my buddies try to self-medicate their emotional pain with drugs and alcohol. I didn't want any part of that because I wanted to live—I wanted to be around for my grandchildren. The Dayton VA Medical Center comforted me in so many ways, physically and mentally. I was there twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. They were like a second family to me; the VA had a job to do, and they did it with class and care.

Because the VA put me back together and gave me a renewed lease on life, I was able to go on and be successful in my life. I am the Mayor of the City of Springboro, I'm on my sixth term, and have been in office for almost twenty-four years. I am a National Purple Heart Officer and the State Finance Officer. I believe that if it hadn't been for my mother and the VA, I would not have been able to be as successful as I am today. I think the VA has made me a better person because, first of all, they made me better. They helped me and they continued to help me through all of these many, many years. I really attribute the fact I was able to be put back into the world because of the VA helping me, and I will always be indebted to the VA. The Dayton VA Medical Center goes that extra mile to make you feel worthy, special, and show you they appreciate that you served your country. Look at the mission statement of the VA—they absolutely "get it."

Prologue

Stand on a quiet knoll somewhere on these historic grounds and imagine that you can hear it…the sound of hammers nailing board to board, the unloading of lumber from railcars and carts, the shouting of men to one another as they diligently work day after day to construct the grandest facility to care for Veterans that the world had ever seen. A place that, in its full glory, would house the most Veterans of any facility in the world, become the headquarters of the entire Veterans Home system, attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, and raise its host city of Dayton, Ohio to national prominence.

"It is sudden, the transition from marching bravely at morning on two sound legs, grasping your rifle in two sturdy arms, to lying at nightfall under a tree with a member forever gone."
(Photographic History of the Civil War, Vol. 7; Photo: Mathew Brady, 1822-1896, Library of Congress)

This historic site has been known by many names over the decades: "The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, Central Branch", "The Dayton Soldiers Home", "The National Military Home", "The VA Center", and now "The Dayton VA Medical Center". To understand its history, is it helpful to know something of the people, events and social climate that led up to the creation of this nearly 400-acre Veterans' facility in southwestern Ohio. While several books have been written about the general plight and care of injured soldiers after the Civil War, this book illuminates the determination of a concerned citizenry and the leadership of our country to dedicate unparalleled resources to the deserving and yet desperately impoverished defenders of the Union, and how Dayton became the focus of that resolute effort.

By the end of the Civil War in 1865, hundreds of thousands of soldiers braved the arduous return home from battlefields or makeshift hospitals, injured in body and mind, suffering from diseases contracted during service, only to find themselves destitute and unable to support themselves or their families. The sight of these soldiers missing limbs, blinded, or ailing—relegated to begging in the streets—was an embarrassment to a nation that owed its Veterans a debt of gratitude for their many sacrifices.

"Buildings of the Great Central Fair, in Aid of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Logan Square, Philadelphia, June 1864."
Sanitary fairs were organized to raise funds and supplies for the war effort.
(Image: Library of Congress)

In response, various organizations and individuals worked tirelessly during and after the war to provide aid to injured, sick, and disabled Veterans. A volunteer organization, the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), was formally authorized by President Abraham Lincoln to run the Union's field hospitals during the war and to establish homes throughout the country. These "homes" were often former hotels or other suitable buildings that were transformed into facilities for the care of sick, injured or homeless ex-soldiers. In many cities and communities, women's organizations led the effort to provide returning Veterans with much-needed food, shelter, medical care, and emotional support.

Thirty-Eighth Congress of the United States of America;

At the Second Session,

Begun and held at the City of Washington, on Monday, the Fifth day of December, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four

AN ACT

In the wake of the war, many powerful citizens and politicians, including those who ran the USSC, opposed the idea of establishing large, government-run institutions to oversee Veterans' care. Instead, they preferred the idea of distributing significant pensions to former soldiers to provide financial security. while relying on local communities to oversee the Veterans' medical care and well-being. They feared that making ex-soldiers into wards of the state would crush the independent and self-reliant nature of these fighting men; that they would languish away from boredom in gloomy institutions, forgotten by society. But others, especially those on the front lines of the relief organizations, believed the "generous pension" policy to be unrealistic, considering the overwhelming numbers of men needing care, and the lack of adequate resources to meet that need.

Delphine Baker

One proponent for a higher standard of government involvement was Delphine Baker, a philanthropist from Chicago who called for a federal asylum for Veterans. (In the context of the 1800s, an "asylum" could mean a place of refuge or sanctuary, rather than a mental health institution.) Near the end of the war, she ramped up efforts for her cause by moving to New York City to help start the National Literary Association, whose goal was to establish and maintain a national home for disabled Civil War soldiers. Baker, along with notable and wealthy supporters, submitted a 100-signature petition to the U.S. Senate in 1864, asking Congress to create such a home on the banks of the Hudson River, north of New York City. Although this proposal did not come to pass, it did serve to bring more attention to the issue of Veteran care, and on March 1, 1865,

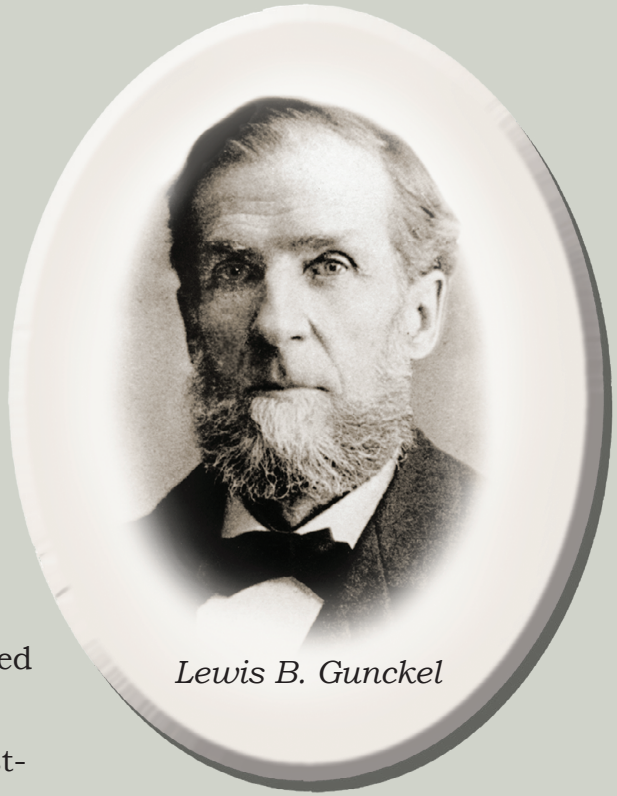
The day after President Lincoln signed the Act of Congress that established the National Asylum, he gave his second inaugural address in which he vowed to "care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan". (Images: Alexander Gardener, Library of Congress)

Senator Henry Wilson introduced a bill to Congress to create a system of federal asylums "for the relief of the totally disabled officers and men of the volunteer forces of the United States." Congress passed the act quickly and President Lincoln signed it into law two days later on March 3, 1865. This Act authorized a 100-member board to organize and manage a system of Veterans' facilities, originally called the "National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers". This large and unwieldy Board of Managers could not form a quorum at any meeting called during the following year, and little was accomplished. Despairing of this failure, the future president of the Board, General Benjamin Butler, sat down with a Congressman from Dayton, Brigadier General Robert C. Schenck, and the two hammered out a better plan. From this undertaking, Congress amended the Asylum Act on March 21, 1866, limiting the Board to nine active members (and three ex officio members) who would agree to serve voluntarily without pay for a set term.

Two months later, another man from Dayton became the first elected Secretary at the first meeting of the new Board of Managers. This man would play a significant role in crafting the basic philosophy and success of the National Asylum system.

Left; Dayton attorney and U.S. Congressman, Brig. Gen. Robert C. Schenck (Photo: Mathew Brady, National Archives)

Lewis B. Gunckel: "Father" of the Dayton Soldiers Home



Lewis B. Gunckel

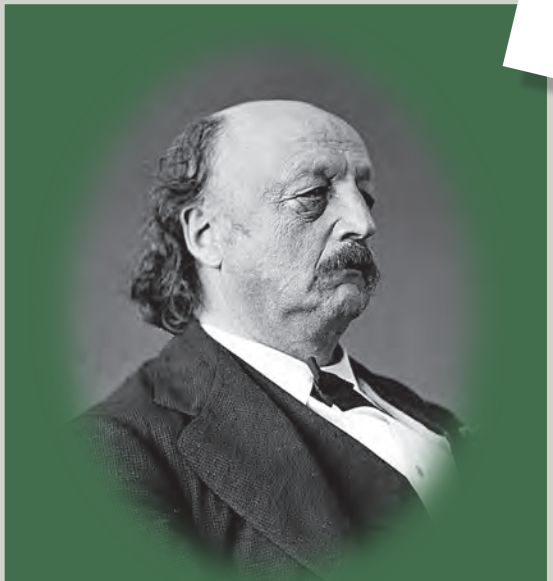
As Secretary of the Board of Managers, the Honorable Lewis B. Gunckel, an attorney from the village of Germantown near Dayton, Ohio was enthusiastically and whole-heartedly committed to Veterans and their welfare during and after the Civil War. His influence among politicians of the day had helped to establish the state-run Ohio Soldiers' Home in Columbus during the conflict. Although not an ideal home—having been converted from Tripler Military Hospital—it did provide the basic necessities of life for several hundred disabled Veterans.

During the summer of 1866, the Board decided that three asylums should be placed in strategic locations throughout the North (Confederate soldiers were not eligible for care in these facilities). Next, the Board dispatched research committees consisting of three Board members each to investigate the best locations for these asylums. They determined that an Eastern Branch of the National Asylum would reside near Augusta, Maine, at a former resort called Togus Springs and a Northwestern Branch was selected for Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This left only the Central branch as undecided. While there was a consensus that this branch should be based in Ohio, the exact site had not been agreed upon. Gunckel was on the committee tasked with recommending a site for the Central Branch, and although he lobbied hard for Dayton to be selected, the other members of the Board preferred a site nearer to Columbus—a former resort called White Sulphur Springs.

In the Board's reckoning, potential locations should meet certain criteria: they would be near to, but outside of, the city limits of a major metropolitan center, they should feature ample sources of clean water and sufficient acreage, and they must provide for railroad access to and from the site. As news of the investigation spread, the prospect of an Asylum facility appealed to many cities, as they would bring a measure of prosperity and increased business to any locale selected to sponsor it, and local citizenry of candidate sites viewed it as a community

investment. While the Board privately debated the Central Branch location, the citizens of Dayton wasted no time in raising a $20,000 donation to sweeten the lobbying pot for the selection of their city. In the spring of 1867, to keep the process of locating the Central Branch moving forward, the Managers proactively approved a "Plan B".

White Sulphur Springs was a resort located in Delaware County, Ohio on the banks of the Scioto River. It was advertised in1858 as having therapeutic baths consisting of magnesia, chalybeate, saline chalybeate, and of course white sulphur. The resort was closed in 1869, sold to the state of Ohio, and became the State Reform School for Girls. (Image: Courtesy of the Hayes Presidential Library and Museums)



Gen. Benjamin Butler was the first President of the Board of Managers and served from 1866 to 1879. He was a very controversial figure during the war due to his actions as military commander of New Orleans after his Union forces captured the city. (Photo: Library of Congress)

If the first choice, White Sulphur Springs, could not fill the bill, the alternate site of Dayton would be selected automatically and without further discussion. In the end, the lack of a railroad to White Sulphur Springs eliminated it from contention, and later that August, Lewis Gunckel procured approximately 400 acres of farmland three miles west of Dayton that had been proposed as ideal ground. The location high above flood level, its proximity to the city, an abundant spring water supply, and an existing railroad line all met the criteria for placement of a National Asylum. Here in the rolling farmland of southwestern Ohio, Gunckel began to fulfill his vision of creating the magnificent Home that he and the other Board members believed the Veterans so richly deserved.

Our Veterans' Voices

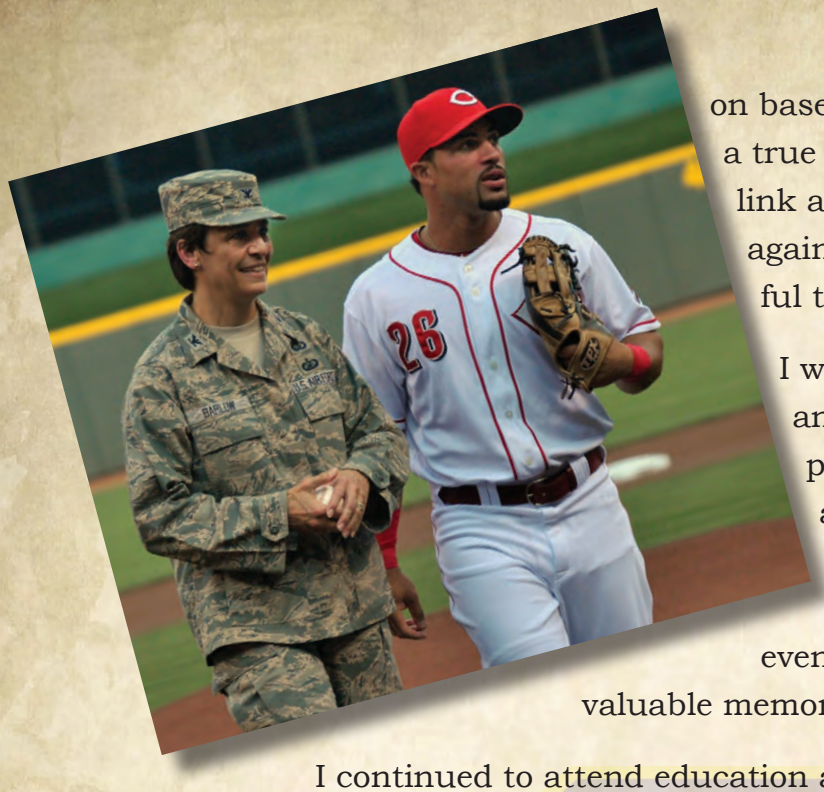
Cassie Barlow

U.S. Air Force, Former Commander of 88th Air Base Wing & Installation, Wright-Patterson AFB

My family and upbringing molded me into the person I am today. I grew up in a no excuses household with two parents who were teachers. They both expected a lot and encouraged us to do our best. My parents also taught us the value of service. My father served in World War II—he was a medic in the Battle of the Bulge. He was proud to have served his country, but never really spoke about his time in service. My brother, sister, and I looked for whatever scholarship opportunities were available at that time. I stumbled across the opportunity for a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship. It was such a great opportunity to not only get a scholarship for school, but also to serve my country. What I thought was going to be a 4-year commitment turned into 26 years. I feel like I grew into a leader over time, shaped by many experiences along the way.

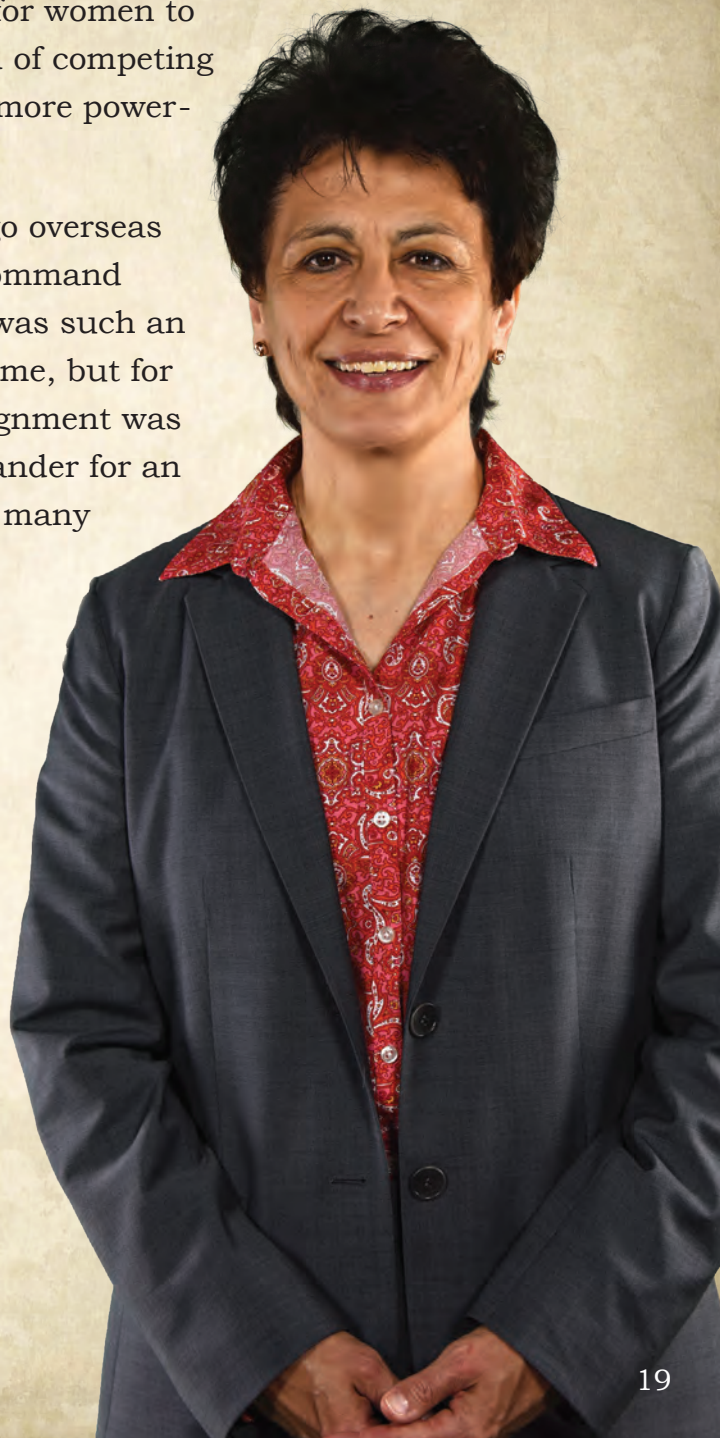
I was a student of leadership throughout my career and could not read enough about the topic, which led me to my first advanced degree—a Master's in Clinical Psychology. This degree helped me relate to people and address their needs. At the end of my first assignment, I had an opportunity to advance my education and earn a Ph.D. in psychology. There was not a day in my Air Force career where I didn't use that degree.

I was fortunate to have great opportunities in my career. I was blessed to be given more responsibility while I grew as a leader and was selected to be a Squadron Commander. This was my first big opportunity to lead an Air Force Unit. I was also honored to serve with the first female fighter pilot squadron commander. She was a very capable Officer and now serves in Congress. During this time, I was one of three female squadron commanders



on base. It was a very exciting part of my life and when leadership became a true passion for me. It is important for women to link arms and help each other instead of competing against each other. We are so much more powerful together than standing alone.

I was given a great opportunity to go overseas and serve in Germany in a joint command position in my career field. This was such an amazing experience, not just for me, but for my entire family. The next assignment was also overseas as a group commander for an even bigger organization, and I have many valuable memories from my time there.



I continued to attend education and training opportunities throughout my career. I'm a student at heart and I love it! I think that is what led me to a workforce development position after my active duty career.

I have found another passion in the next chapter of my life and that is serving Veterans. We have so much to do in our country to improve services to Veterans. I currently work in a position where I can serve Veterans and be involved in the Veteran community. I have immensely enjoyed being in a job where I have Veteran connections in the region and across the state. We have been very successful in pulling Veterans from all over the country to come to Dayton, Ohio. We have so many organizations in our community that are out there serving Veterans. I feel I have truly found my niche for this stage in my life and that is to continue to get the word out that Dayton, Ohio is a great place for Veterans and that the community understands and respects them.

Chapter 1: Building a "Soldiers Home"

Winter was approaching...

While the Board deliberated on where to place the Central Branch, Lewis Gunckel traveled to Columbus to formally transfer administration of the Ohio Soldiers' Home into the new National Asylum system. In previous years, his efforts in Congress had led to the formation of the State Home in 1866 and he was one of its appointed trustees. So it was bittersweet for Gunckel, on that 26th day of March 1867, to address the Veterans gathered together to hear him speak. Though he described his reunion with the State Home to be "like coming back to one's first love", he had trepidation about the great responsibility that lay before him to assure that the proposed National Asylum lived up to everyone's expectations.

Gunckel's speech that day reveals much about his feelings of pride and praise for the State Home and its transfer to the federal government. He also described how the new institution would be run by disabled Veteran officers, that it would be run by military rule (for the good of the ex-soldiers), and that pensioners would pay for clothing with a portion of their earnings. But most

"... Although technically the National Asylum, we wish you still to look upon it as the 'Soldiers' Home.' We hope soon to furnish you one better deserving the name. Like the pioneer who first builds a log cabin. soon to be replaced by a larger and more comfortable mansion, so this, your first home, will soon give way to one much larger and better.

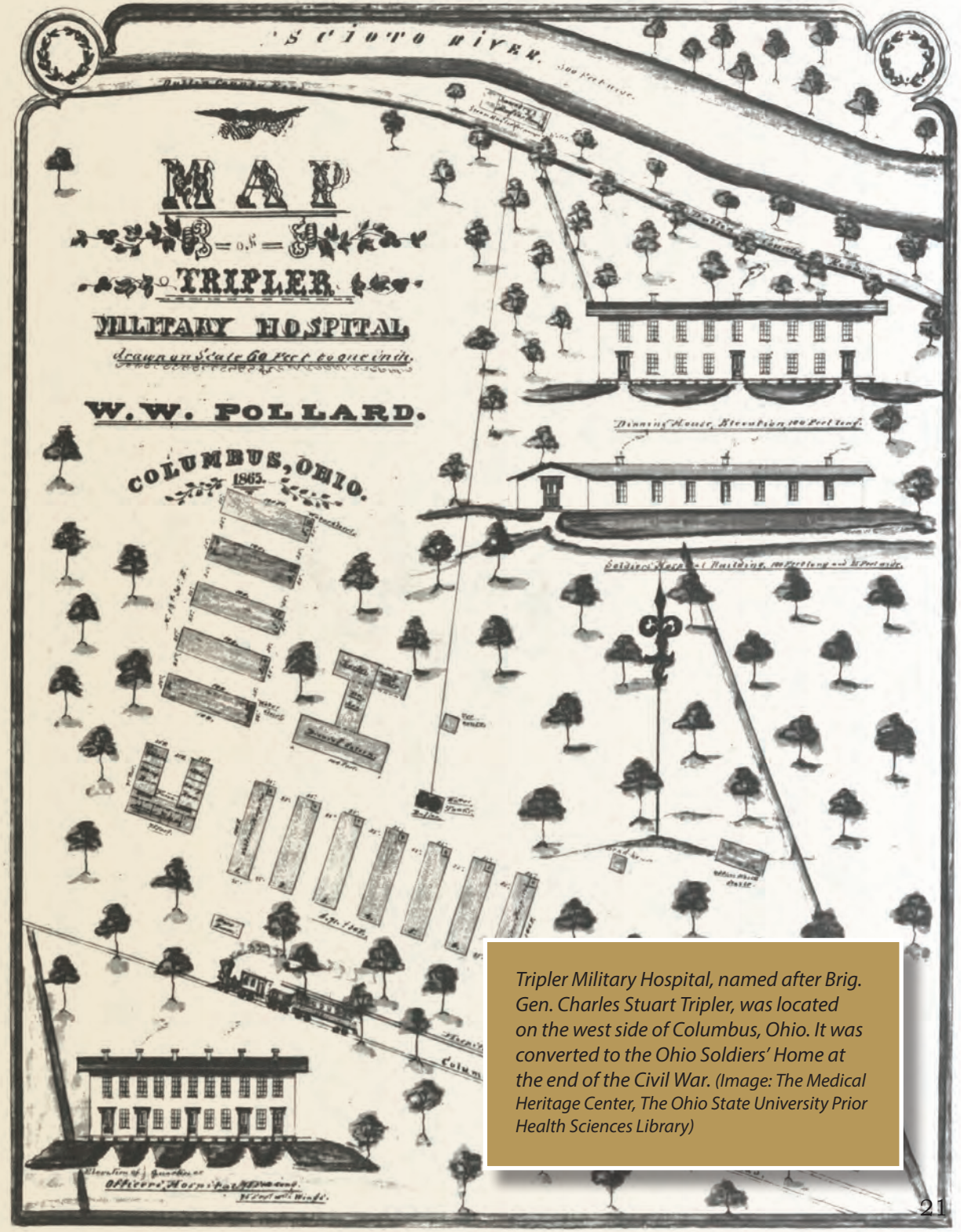
We hope, before long, to give you one which in beauty and healthfulness of situation, extent of grounds, and size and character of buildings, shall equal that of the richest and best of the land. In addition to chapel and school-room there will be workshops, where you may learn new and lighter trades adapted to your several disabilities.

We hope by proper surgical care and nursing to send many of you again into the world healthy and able to take care of yourselves, and by suitable education to prepare many of you for teachers, book-keepers, clerks, mechanics, etc., and so be able to enter the lists with the best. Whenever you think you can get along in the world we prefer that you should try. If you succeed, we bid you God speed. If you fail, we will welcome you back; for here, as long as you live, is your HOME, to which, if you have left with an honorable discharge, you will be ever welcome."

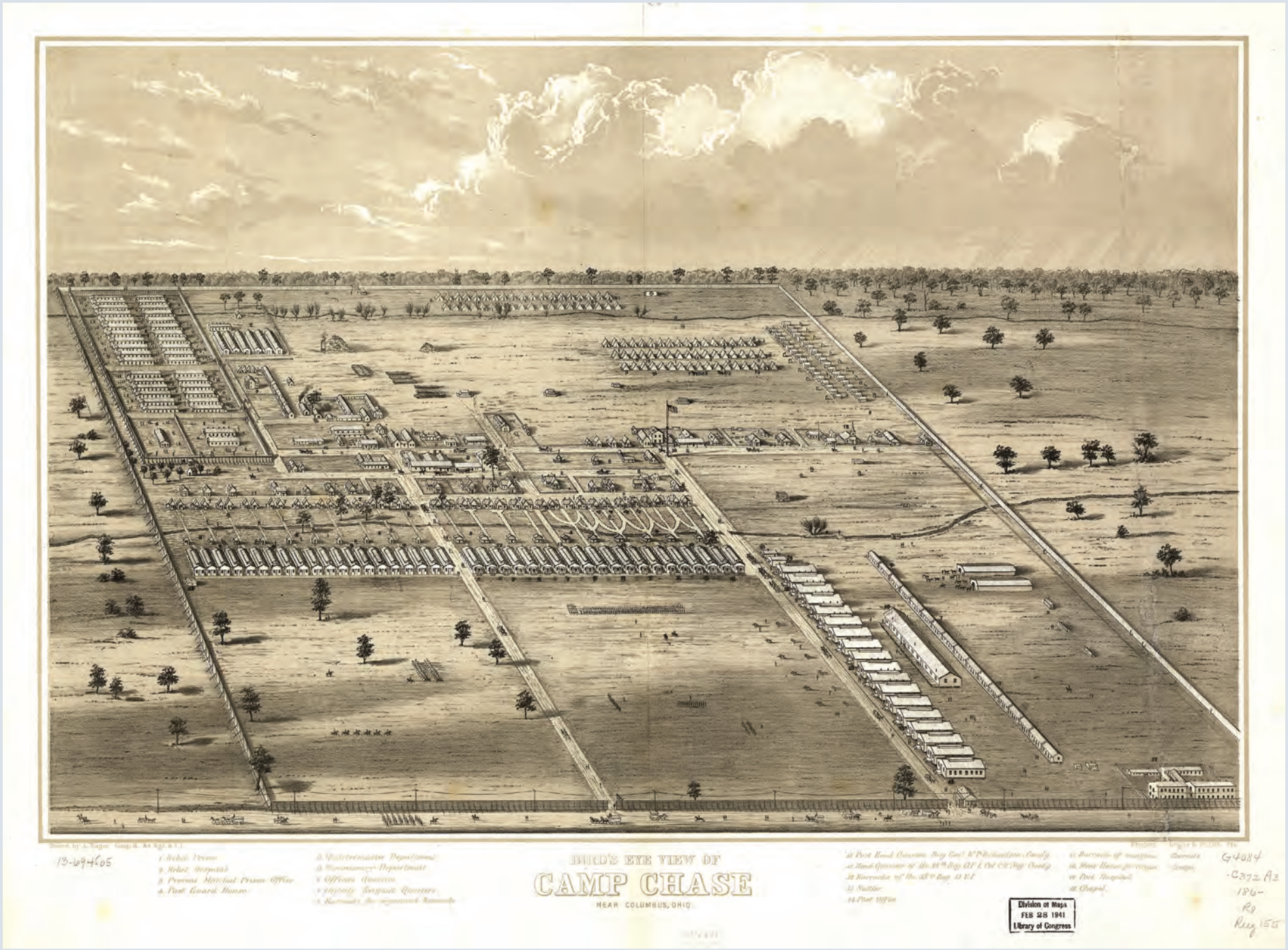
~ Lewis B. Gunckel, at Ohio Soldiers Home

importantly, he impressed upon the men assembled before him—former soldiers with all manner of disabling conditions—that they should view the new asylum as a home, with the warmth, security and happiness that a home represents.

With the ceremonial transfer of the Ohio Soldiers' Home complete, it was time to begin constructing the new, larger facility to house those men sheltered there, and the many Veterans who would come later. In August, with White Sulphur Springs no longer an option, the way was clear to begin development on the Dayton site. Realizing there may be difficulty in quickly procuring the materials needed for such a grand ambition, Congress donated to the project all the temporary buildings at Camp Chase—a Columbus military training base and former Civil War prisoner-of-war camp. Gunckel arranged for the disassembly of the buildings and had the lumber shipped to Dayton for re-construction of



Tripler Military Hospital, named after Brig. Gen. Charles Stuart Tripler, was located on the west side of Columbus, Ohio. It was converted to the Ohio Soldiers' Home at the end of the Civil War. (Image: The Medical Heritage Center, The Ohio State University Prior Health Sciences Library)



In 1861, the federal government created Camp Chase as a military recruitment and training base for the volunteer Union army. It also served as a prison camp for captured Confederate troops and civilian sympathizers. Living conditions in the prison camp were harsh and disease was rampant; during the winter of 1863-64, hundreds of prisoners died of smallpox. At the end of the war, the buildings were disassembled and the lumber shipped to the Central Branch Asylum in Dayton. Today, all that remains of Camp Chase is a 2-acre Confederate cemetery. (Image: Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress)

the urgently needed soldiers' barracks to use as housing. Winter was approaching, and he was keenly aware of the many homeless, penniless Veterans facing the harsh reality of the coming cold.

Some early residents of the Dayton Soldiers' Home pose with visitors .

If there is merit to the theory "build it and they will come", the Central Branch would be a shining example. In his speech at the State Home in March, Gunckel's reference to a pioneer's log cabin was foretelling: the first headquarters for the Home was exactly that— a homesteader's log cabin. Almost everything was make-do; quarters for the officers were an existing farmhouse, and the dining hall was an old red barn. When the first Veterans from the Ohio Soldiers' Home arrived at the Central Branch on September 2, 1867, the building pace was fast and furious. A temporary hospital and other buildings went up from that Camp Chase lumber, and by the end of December that year, the last of the Ohio Soldiers' Home Veterans arrived, placing the total number at nearly seven hundred and fifty men. The end of the next winter would see a thousand men cared for, and thirteen hundred the year after that. Gunckel stated that he wished workers had not needed to hurry so, but the barracks filled as quickly as they could put them up. Although he later lamented that the construction could have been better, with a more carefully planned layout, his goal of providing a healthy and peaceful place where men could thrive had been accomplished. Fittingly, even though the official name of the newly established system was the National Asylum, the place quickly became known as the Dayton Soldiers' *Home*.

Above: "Middle Lake" under construction. The Upper, Middle and Lower Lakes on the east side of the property were the result of natural spring water filling small quarries created by the Veterans as they excavated limestone for building material.

At right: Veterans sit near one of the Home's limestone quarries. This quarry was likely located on the southeastern side of the grounds; it no longer exists.

Gunckel needn't have lamented for long, because those first hastily-constructed buildings would make way for a much grander design to come. Permanent buildings of stone and brick would feature prominently on the landscape, built from quarried limestone lying beneath the surrounding farmland. The quarry was then transformed into a series of small man-made lakes that captured the natural spring water as it flowed up from underground. It was the beginning of the beautifully lush garden spot to come, where both Veterans and visitors could rest and relax. Army Chaplain T.B. Van Horn designed the layout for the grounds, resulting in broad avenues of crushed stone, lawns, gardens, ponds, and groves of trees. Before long, the tract of farmland became a scenic attraction that brought to Dayton an unforeseen number of tourists to visit the "old soldiers" in their new home.

Making Progress...

Early on, it was clear to Gunckel which construction projects were needed immediately: a hospital to heal the physical and mental wounds and illnesses many ex-soldiers still suffered after the war, and a chapel to heal the spiritual wounds as well.

Architect C.B. Davis was hired to design a state-of-the-art hospital, along with host of talented tradesmen to do the construction work. The three-story brick building cost $185,000 and could accommodate three hundred patients. Its dedication ceremony on May 19, 1870 was the grandest event at the Home up until that point. In attendance was Ohio Governor (and future President) Rutherford B. Hayes, along with the Governor of Indiana, members of the National Asylum's Board of Managers and other invited guests and dignitaries. The Veterans all turned out in their best "bib and tucker" as the newspapers recounted it, and several speeches were made, including one by Gunckel about the frenzied pace at which the first buildings were erected. His description of how wings were added to the old barn they used as a dining hall, in

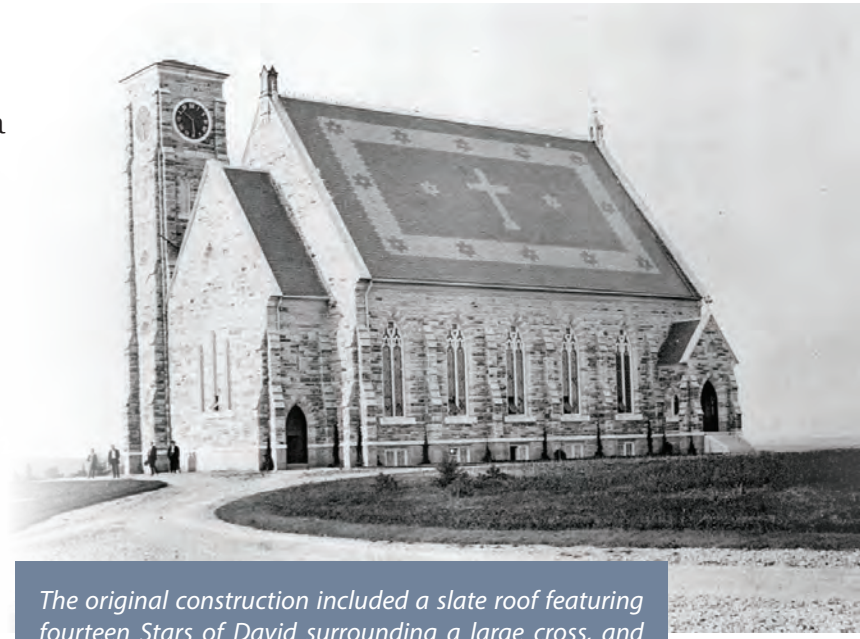
With seven pinnacled towers, a massive porch with an ornamental balustrade, and a domed observatory capping the center tower, the hospital was an impressive structure to behold. (Image: courtesy David Neuhardt Collection)

The interior of Home Hospital was described as not lacking in any detail that would add to the comfort or safety of the patients. White-painted walls with alternating light and dark panels of walnut wainscoting decorated the sick wards, with rows of green Corinthian columns supporting the ceiling and upper floor.

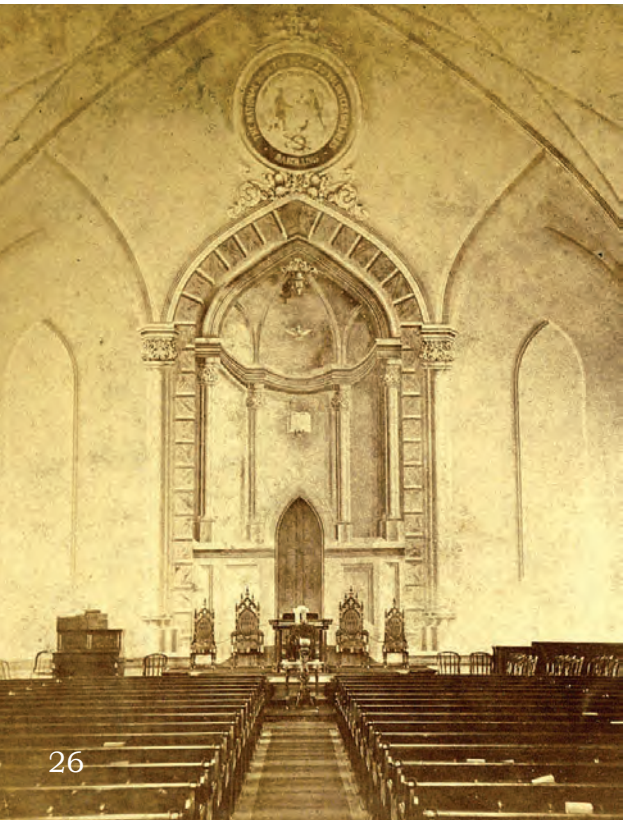
order to accommodate more and more men (and also likely to shore it up), is illustrative of how construction problems were dealt with in the early years: “we took up and threw out the old barn, raised the whole a story and half, and so made the dining hall as it now stands.”

The pride they had in the new hospital—though a well-conceived, well-constructed edifice—was apparent. It stood prominently near the entrance to the grounds where Veterans and visitors alike would be welcomed by its grand permanence.

The hospital wasn’t the only building under construction at that time, and later that fall the next important structure to be dedicated was the Home chapel. Limestone blocks were used as the primary building material, and most of the stone quarrying and construction work was done by the more able-bodied Veterans. This allayed any fear that the men would lose their spirit and remain listless. Though it primarily served the Home’s Protestant population, Catholics also utilized the church with their services being held every other Thursday. As one Veteran so elegantly stated, “No other instance of the kind can be found, in this or any other country, where Protestants and Catholics worship in harmony in the same church. And why not—seeing we worship the same God, believe in the same Christ, and strive for the same heaven.”



The original construction included a slate roof featuring fourteen Stars of David surrounding a large cross, and the northwest corner formed a tower with a clock face on all four sides. The faces were backlit with gas lamps able to be seen from all parts of campus after sundown. Two years later a spire was added to the clock tower, which would eventually house the Centennial Bell—custom ordered from a foundry in Troy, New York—in honor of the nation’s 100th anniversary.



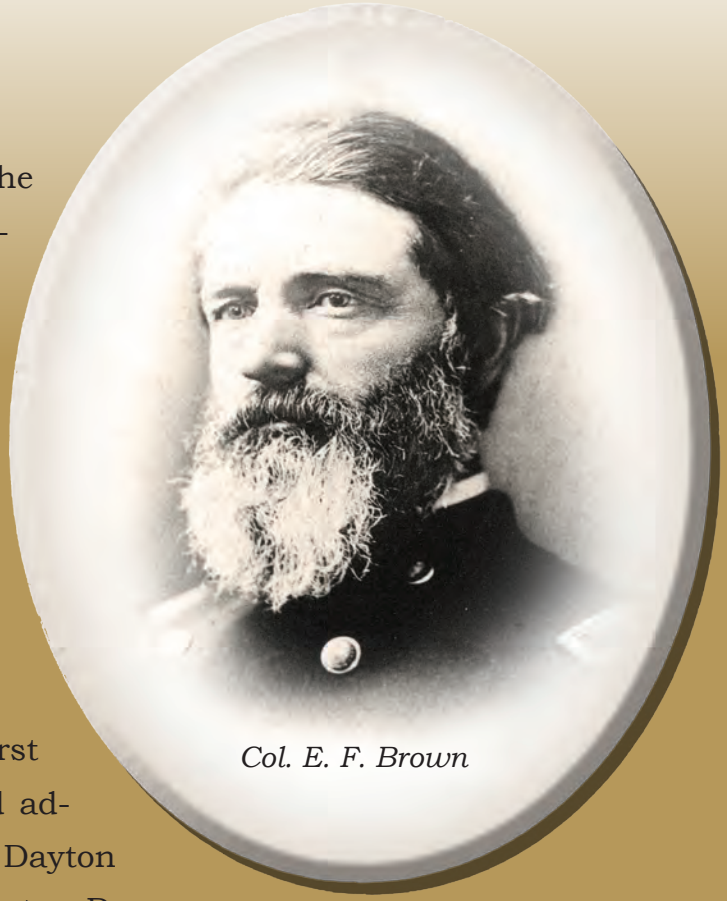
Left: Home Chapel interior, circa 1870

Additional Buildings Constructed During the Home's Early Years

Upper left: The 3-story, white wooden barracks were some of the very first buildings constructed at the Home (built in 1867). *Upper middle:* the bandstand sheltered the musicians as they performed on summer evenings (built in 1871). *Upper right:* as one of two entrances to the Home, the North Gate Guard House stands at the corner of Third Street and Gettysburg Avenue (built in 1870). *Lower left:* the Headquarters Building housed the offices of the Governor, Treausurer, Secretary and Steward; the early libraries and reading room comprised the upper floors (built in 1871).

The Founding Fathers...and a Little Mother

There is little dispute that Lewis Gunckel was a primary driving force in the early success of the Dayton Soldiers Home. The goal of the Board to provide a home-like environment for the deserving Veterans of the long war was considered by many to have been met, and in some instances, exceeded. In reality, the Home more closely resembled a community, due to the size of the land, the number of buildings and the significant population of residents. But whether a home or a village, it required more than bricks and mortar to succeed in its mission. At its heart, it needed passionate people devoted to sustaining a safe, comfortable refuge for the injured and broken men in their care.



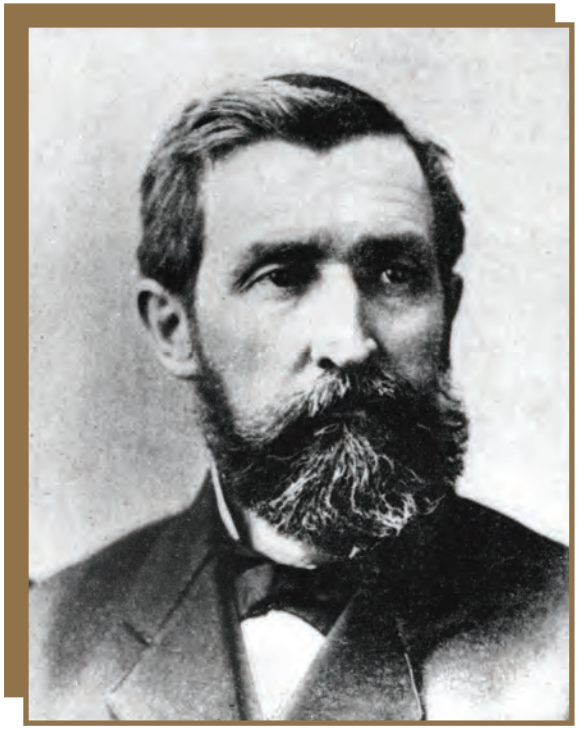
Col. E. F. Brown

The Colonel's Parlor

Colonel Edwin F. Brown was the first permanent Governor (as the head administrator was then called) of the Dayton Soldiers' Home. Briefly preceded by two Deputy Governors (whose short reigns were caused by poor health), Col. Brown was a former prisoner-of-war who had lost his left arm in the Battle of Cedar Mountain near Culpepper, Virginia. Descriptions of Col. Brown in historical accounts paint the picture of a humble man, possessing strength of character, patience and a sense of humor. He was held in the highest esteem by his staff and the Veterans in his charge. He served as Governor of the Dayton Soldiers' Home for twelve years until he was ultimately promoted to Inspector General of the entire National Asylum system.

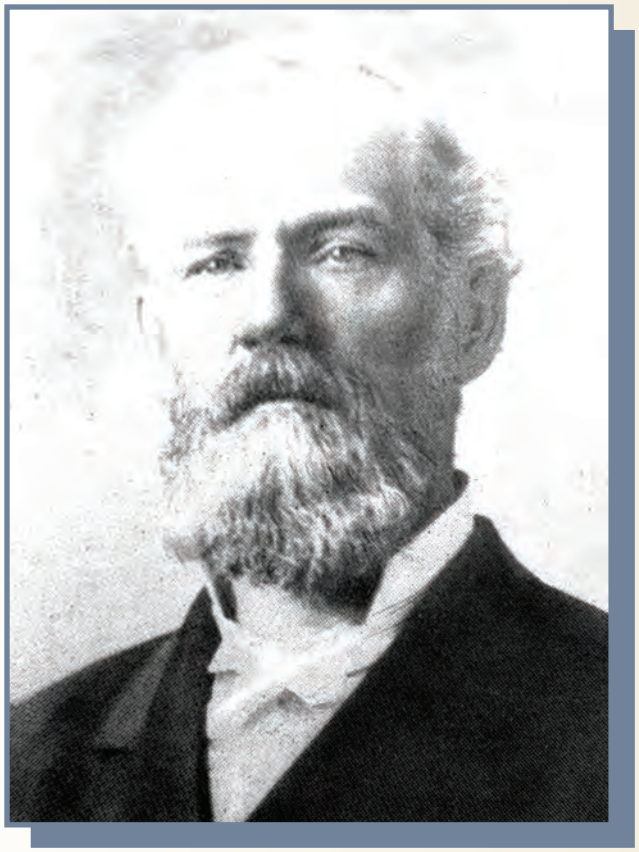
Several men who reported to Col. Brown were instrumental in the early functioning of the Home. Dr. Clarke McDermont came to Dayton from his appointment as the Surgeon-General of the state of Ohio, an office that had been terminated at the end of the war. The Board of Managers rewarded his outstanding service with the appointment to the Central Branch, and he remained in that position until August of 1874. Captain A.F. Woodruff served as the first Secretary of the Home, and later as the Steward. He served until 1872 when his war-time disability finally caused his resignation. However, he was so highly regarded by the men and leaders alike that he was allowed to remain in residence at the Home and enjoy its benefits. Colonel Jerome B. Thomas was the Home's first Treasurer, a departure from his usual occupation as a physician. His intent was to replace Clarke McDermont upon the doctor's retirement; yet his abilities as treasurer were so exemplary, the Board requested that he remain in this office, which he did until becoming Governor in 1888. Upon his passing in 1907, the beloved Col. Thomas was buried in the Home cemetery with much sadness by all who knew him. Years later, a new hospital at the Home would be named in his honor.

Dr. Clarke McDermont



Col. Jerome B. Thomas

If the administrative staff could be considered the mind and hands of the Central Branch, then its heart was the Chaplain. Not many had as much influence on the success of the Dayton Soldiers' Home as Chaplain William Earnshaw. From the day he accompanied the first Veterans arriving from the State Home, he ministered with



Rev. William Earnshaw

a passion born from his deep caring about the welfare of the men. He was involved in almost every aspect of the Dayton Home that contributed to their happiness and well-being. Few better understood the plight of disabled soldiers; as a battlefield chaplain from the time he entered the war in 1861 to its end, he had seen the worst of what war did to men, and his compassion for them was inexhaustible.

Earnshaw had initially served in the Army of the Potomac, but was later reassigned to the Army of the Cumberland under Gen. George Thomas, where they became fast friends. Upon the conflict's end, Gen. Thomas tasked him with recovering the remains of over 22,000 soldiers killed in the southern battles of the war, and to create a number of official Veterans' cemeteries where they could be reburied in a manner befitting their sacrifice. With an enthusiasm and dedication typical in all his endeavors, Chaplain Earnshaw carried out his task and established the national cemeteries in Tennessee at Stones River, Nashville, and later at Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, and Memphis. He also became the Chaplain and Commander of the Department of Ohio Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), and was elected Commander-in-Chief of the entire G.A.R. in 1879.

Rev. Earnshaw at his "drum pulpit" during the Civil War

After coming to Dayton, Earnshaw served not only as

Gen. George Thomas

the official Protestant Chaplain (local priests were brought in to administer the Catholic rites and services), but also as the organizer of the Home's first library, named after his old friend General Thomas. He formed multiple social and temperance organizations on campus and presided over countless events held at the Home. His eloquent speeches graced occasions such as holidays, dignitary visits, and dedications. He ministered to the sick in the hospital, led funeral services for the deceased and held Bible classes and Sunday school to augment his weekly sermon.

Thomas Library and Reading Room

As a military institution of the 1800s, the majority of the staff were men and even the sick wards of the hospital were tended by male nurses. But one exception was to be found in a remarkable woman. Emma Miller lost her husband early in the war, and from then on devoted her life's work to assisting Veterans needing care after their military service. She joined the Sanitary Commission in Cleveland to care for sick and wounded soldiers, later moving to Columbus to do the same at the State Soldiers' Home. She, along with Chaplain Earnshaw, accompanied the first men to come to the new Home in Dayton in September of 1867. Her official job title was Matron, but because of her tireless energy, a keen eye for cleanliness and order, and a kind heart, she was affectionately known to all at the Home as "Little Mother". Her devotion and diligence earned her more responsibility over time, and before long she was named as Superintendent of the Central Branch's clothing depot, which supplied

most articles of clothing for all the National Homes. She also managed a hotel and restaurant that were later built to accommodate the throngs of visitors. She worked and lived at the Home where she was beloved for the rest of her days, and in acknowledgement for her service, she received a commission in the United States Army, the first ever awarded to an American woman. When she passed, she was buried with full military honors in the Home cemetery.

With the commitment and attention of resourceful leaders like Col. Brown, Rev. Earnshaw, Emma Miller and the other Home officials, the foundation was laid for the next 150 years of dedicated care and service to the nation's heroes.

Above: An oil painting of Emma Miller, Matron of the Dayton Soldiers' Home

A newspaper article from the Dayton Daily Journal recounts how Emma Miller, ever mindful of the welfare of her charges, would often find it necessary to take a horse-drawn wagon up and down Third Street to pick up and bring back intoxicated Veterans who had overindulged after receiving their pension checks that day. It was common for the Home residents to become victims of local criminals waiting to rob them as they made their way back from the taverns or brothels that had sprung up near the Home. Caring actions such as these were what earned Emma the fond nickname of "Little Mother".

Right: An elderly Emma, seated on the left with her daughter Anna beside her, and her grand-daughter Margaret standing behind. The women posed for this photo on the porch of Home Hospital.

"National Soldiers Home, Dayton Ohio"
circa early 1870s

Lithograph by the Merchants Lithographing Company, Chicago, IL

Our Veterans' Voices

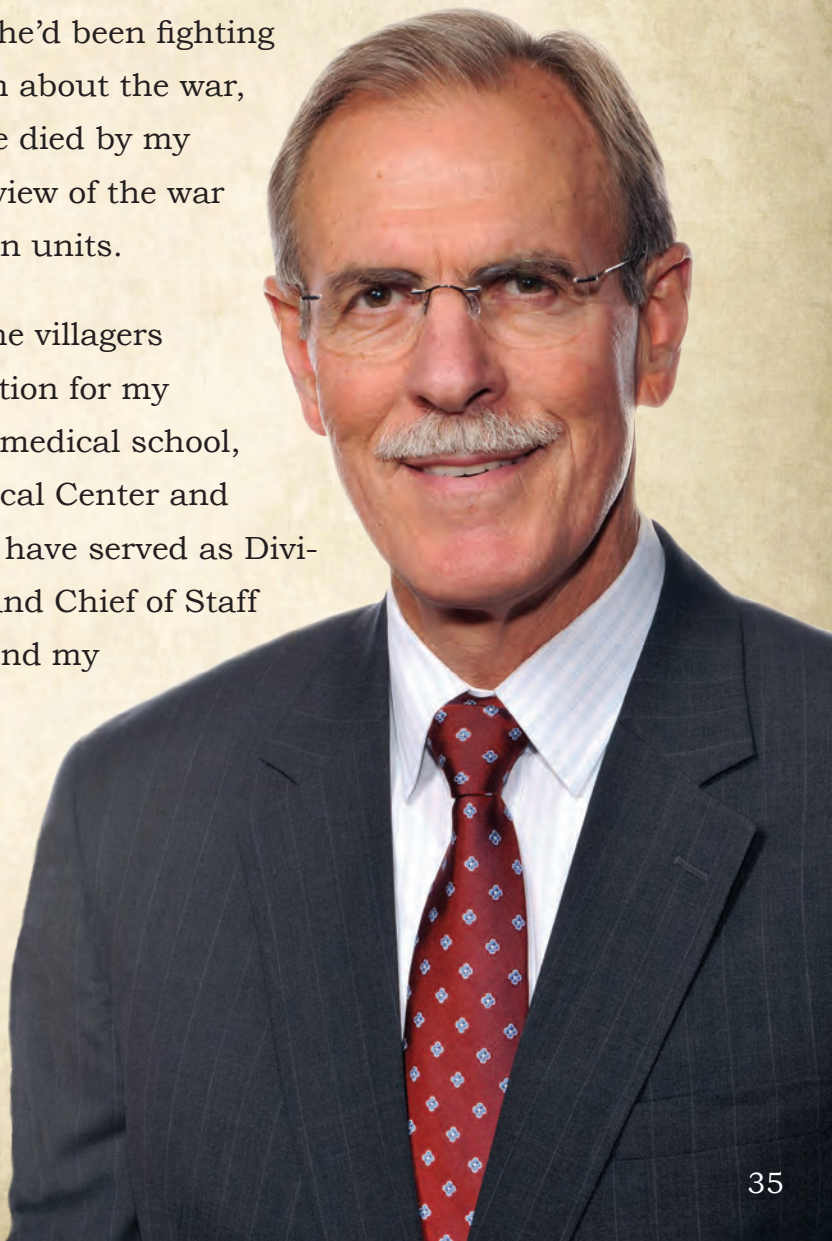
J. Thomas Hardy

U.S. Army, Veteran of the Vietnam War

In the fall of 1962, I went to college on a football scholarship, and without really knowing what I was getting in to, I signed up for ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps). I liked ROTC, and in 1965 I committed to becoming an Army officer—largely because of the forty dollar a month stipend! I'd barely heard of Vietnam when I signed my ROTC commitment letter, but by the time I graduated, I knew I'd end up going there.

I was commissioned June 6, 1966, as an infantry second lieutenant and assigned to the famed 101st Airborne Division. One week after graduating from college, I stood in formation with a thousand other men to begin three weeks of training to become a paratrooper. Most of the fellows I had graduated with a week earlier were at the Jersey Shore, drinking beer and sleeping late every morning. My life had taken a different direction and those first three weeks in jump school, right out of college, knocked the "Joe College" out of me and forced me to grow up. Airborne school, Ranger school, the responsibility of being a 21-year old jumpmaster in charge of a planeload of paratroopers and my association with some of the finest, bravest officers and non-commissioned officers in the Army, made a man out of me.

The day after Christmas, 1967, I went to Vietnam. I was not assigned to an American unit. I became a member of Advisory Team 90, headquartered in Tay Ninh province, on the Cambodian border, about 100 kilometers northwest of Saigon. As an advisor, I was assigned to a five-man team consisting of a captain, a lieutenant and three non-commissioned officers who worked with a Vietnamese Army unit. Each officer had a Vietnamese officer who was his "counterpart." My counterpart was an older Vietnamese lieutenant whose first question was "how old are you?" "Twenty-three," I answered. He told me he'd been fighting longer than I'd been alive! I got the message. I learned a lot from him about the war, the history of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. Later that year, he died by my side in an ambush. I came home from Vietnam with a very different view of the war than the view held by men who'd spent their entire tour with American units.



Watching the wounded being cared for and seeing how appreciative the villagers were for the health and dental care we provided them was the inspiration for my decision to become a physician when I returned from Vietnam. After medical school, I completed a residency in Family Medicine at Eisenhower Army Medical Center and spent the next fifteen years as an Army physician. I was fortunate to have served as Division Surgeon for the 1st Armored Division, as Chief of Primary Care and Chief of Staff at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to attend the Army War College, and to end my career commanding the US Army Hospital, Fort Riley, Kansas.

After retiring from the Army, I worked for almost fifteen years in the private sector before becoming Chief of Staff at the Dayton VA Medical Center. It is the perfect job. It allows me to combine my leadership training, my experience in the private sector and my knowledge as a physician to get Veterans the care they so richly deserve. It also helps that I'm a Veteran.

Chapter 2: Life at the Soldiers Home

Above: Two old soldiers enjoy the view from the banks of Upper Lake. Below left: disabled Veterans pose for photos with visitors to the Home.

What was it like, living at the Soldiers' Home? It would depend greatly on the nature of a Veteran's particular disability. Many men came out of the war missing a leg or two, an arm, or their vision. Some had wounds that would not heal properly or caused chronic pain. A great many had contracted disease while subjected to poor living conditions in the field or in enemy prison camps. Some injuries were not external; the toll the war took on a Veteran's mental and emotional health could be as debilitating to his well-being as a missing appendage. Alcoholism frequently rendered ex-soldiers unable to hold a job or support themselves or their families.

To qualify for admittance, a Veteran would petition in writing to a Board Manager, describing how his service in the war had caused his disability or how an existing medical condition had been aggravated. He would also include his military service discharge papers and pension certificate, if he had such. Upon acceptance of the petition, the Manager would furnish the Veteran with train fare to a Home where he would present his papers to the administrator and undergo an examination by the Home's surgeon to verify the disability. If all was in order, he would be given undergarments and a uniform (at first, these were surplus left over from the war). He would be assigned to a barracks where he would receive a bed with a horsehair mattress and a pillow, bedding and blanket, a chest for his personal belongings, and a wardrobe cabinet for his clothes.

Joshua Williams

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MILITARY HISTORY.

Time and Place of Each Enlistment.	Company and Regiment.	Time and Place of Discharge.	Causes of Discharge.	Kind and Degree of Disability.	When and where Contracted and Received.
Jany 11. 1864 Pittsburgh Pa	G 22d USCT Vet	Oct 16. 1865 Sergeant Philada Pa	Disability	Wounds from fragment of shell on L. leg	Sept 19. 1864 Dutch Gap Va

Integration

USCT Veteran at right in photo

The conditions upon which a soldier would be admitted to a Home applied to all who served the Union's cause, regardless of race. Veterans who had served with the United States Colored Troops (USCT) were eligible for care in the Homes, and a number of them were living at the Ohio Soldiers' Home when it was transferred under the Central Branch. Among them was the first African-American Veteran admitted into the National Home system, Sgt. Joshua Williams. He had served with the 22nd Pennsylvania Infantry Volunteer Regiment, Company G, and had been wounded in the leg during the Battle of Dutch Gap, Virginia.

A former USCT soldier (center) on work detail (photo: from the collections of Dayton HIstory).

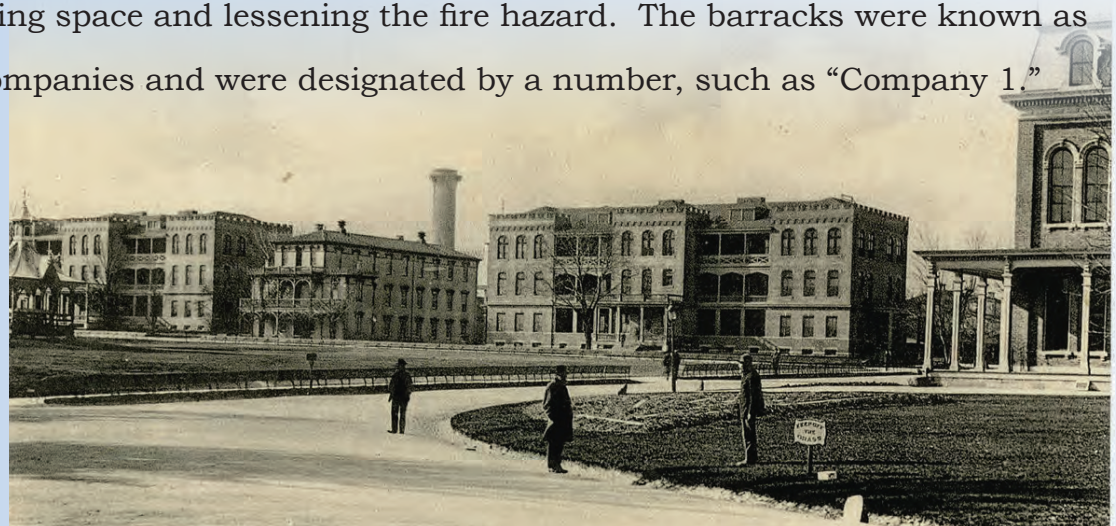
At the early Dayton Soldiers Home, the sleeping, eating and working arrangements were not segregated as they were at other facilities, making the Central Branch the first racially integrated Veterans' facility in the nation. It was not until later that a domiciliary building named General Franklin was designated exclusively for black Veterans.

Barracks Row along the parade grounds

Barracks Life

As previously mentioned, the Home was run according to military rule, and each barrack had a designated Veteran sergeant who enforced cleanliness and order, and solved minor disputes. Little privacy existed in the crowded barracks, whose interiors consisted of open floors lined with beds, with large windows to let in ample light and provide ventilation in the summer. Residents were awakened at 5:00 a.m. with a bugle call to rise, and thirty minutes later a second bugle would call the first shift to the dining hall for breakfast. The first barracks made from the Camp Chase lumber were three-stories high with Mansard-style roofs and constructed in neat rows, similar to a military camp. These barracks were eventually replaced with larger brick ones, providing more living space and lessening the fire hazard. The barracks were known as Companies and were designated by a number, such as "Company 1."

Above: Interior of the barracks named "Company 1"
Left: Around 1900, wooden barracks were replaced by those made of brick



Finances

If a man received a pension for his military service and had no dependents at home eligible for a percentage, the law stipulated that he surrender the entirety of it to the Home to help defray the costs of his upkeep. Pension monies were sent from the Treasury directly to the Homes and kept in personal accounts for each Veteran, to be doled out by the Home Treasurer. However, the administrators never demanded this type of full reimbursement, and they kept back only enough money to pay for a Veteran's clothing. If he performed a job at the Home, he was paid a small allowance that would provide him with extra spending money. If a Veteran later left the Home, he was given his accrued earnings, minus any fines or debts owed.

Work Therapy

The day would progress with the Veterans reporting to their assigned duty stations. This facet of Home life was, at least in the minds of the Managers, the key to its success as a therapeutic and satisfying environment for the residents. Reports from Europe by the United States Sanitary Commission had outlined the pitfalls of allowing war Veterans to idly languish away in sanitariums, with nothing to relieve their boredom or make productive use of their remaining lives. To avoid this scenario, the National Home was founded on the concept of rehabilitation. Re-training injured former soldiers for a new profession and sending them back into the world to make their own way was the highest goal. For others not able to regain self-sufficiency, the option to stay and contribute to the success of their Home was guaranteed.

These Veterans served in the mess hall kitchen to fulfill their work obligation

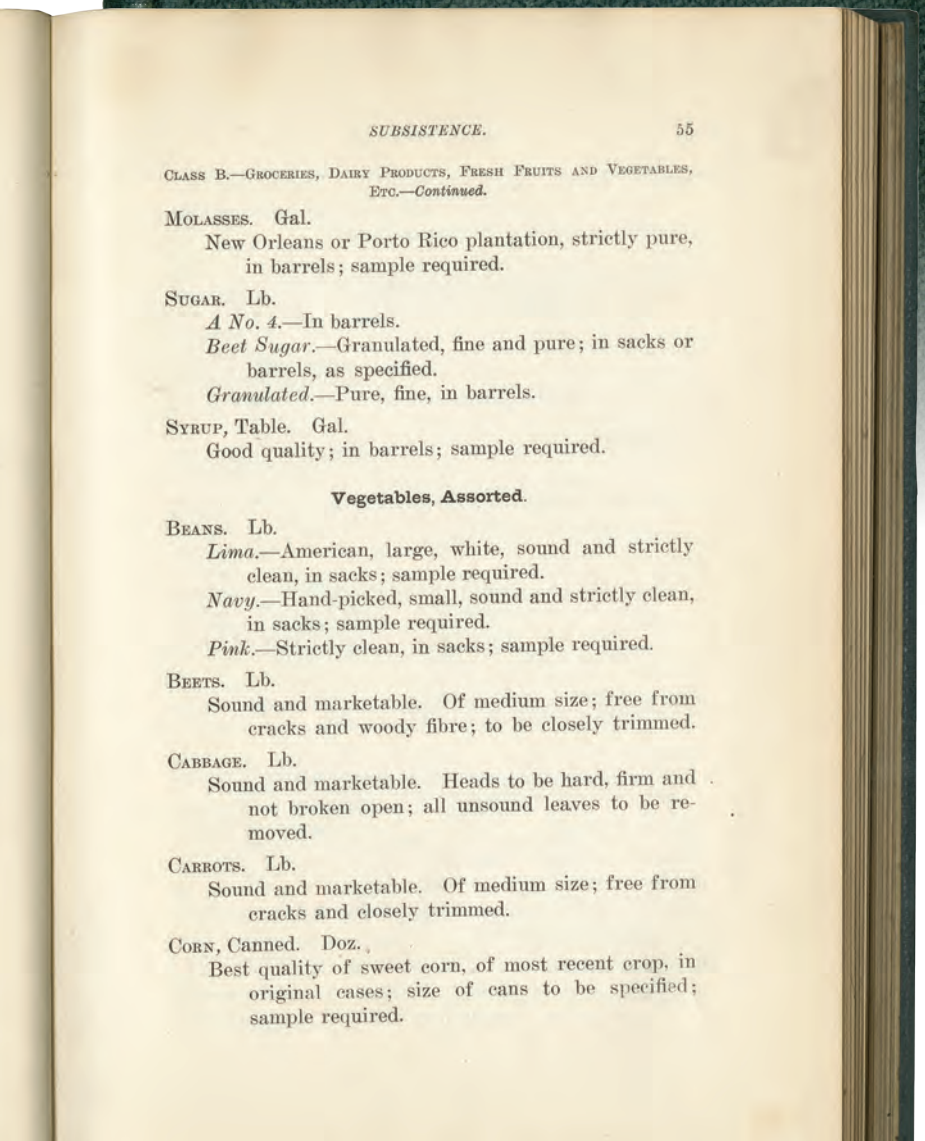
Giving visitors boat rides in the "McPherson"

Accommodating this concept of "work therapy" for so many Veterans required a multitude of workshops. This could be viewed as a win-win situation; the men could learn a new trade, were given a useful purpose for their time and could even earn a small stipend for their labors. At the same time, the Home as a whole benefited from the products and services the residents provided. Items that were produced in surplus to what the Home needed could be sold to tourists or the outside community. The profits from these sales were returned to the facility and kept in a Post Fund to help pay for entertainment and leisure activities such as books, magazine and newspaper subscriptions, games, performance events, etc. Some of the more severely disabled men, such as those suffering blindness, could perform light-duty tasks or excel at crafts such as carving or weaving and were allowed to sell their wares to tourists and keep the profits.

Dining Service

Mealtime at the Soldiers Home was never a small affair. After the first proper dining hall was built in 1874, the administrators found it necessary to add another facility in 1892 due to the swelling population of residents at the Home. Before the new hall was built, feeding thousands of Veterans was an around-the-clock enterprise for the cooking and serving staff, requiring some to get up at three a.m.

Mealtime in the Dining Hall



SUBSISTENCE. 55

CLASS B.—GROCERIES, DAIRY PRODUCTS, FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, ETC.—*Continued.*

MOLASSES. Gal.
New Orleans or Porto Rico plantation, strictly pure, in barrels; sample required.

SUGAR. Lb.
A No. 4.—In barrels.
Beet Sugar.—Granulated, fine and pure; in sacks or barrels, as specified.
Granulated.—Pure, fine, in barrels.

SYRUP, Table. Gal.
Good quality; in barrels; sample required.

Vegetables, Assorted.

BEANS. Lb.
Lima.—American, large, white, sound and strictly clean, in sacks; sample required.
Navy.—Hand-picked, small, sound and strictly clean, in sacks; sample required.
Pink.—Strictly clean, in sacks; sample required.

BEETS. Lb.
Sound and marketable. Of medium size; free from cracks and woody fibre; to be closely trimmed.

CABBAGE. Lb.
Sound and marketable. Heads to be hard, firm and not broken open; all unsound leaves to be removed.

CARROTS. Lb.
Sound and marketable. Of medium size; free from cracks and closely trimmed.

CORN, Canned. Doz.
Best quality of sweet corn, of most recent crop, in original cases; size of cans to be specified; sample required.

Watermelons for everyone; kitchen staff await the first shift of diners

to begin preparing breakfast. Even in the newer hall, with its two rooms that could seat 1,100 men each, mealtime had to be served in two shifts to accommodate everyone. The variety of the menu would be considered plain by today's standards, but most residents seemed quite satisfied with the quality and quantity of fare that was offered.

Cauldrons of coffee are prepared for breakfast

Leisure Time

Left: The original Amusement Hall; it became the Treasurer's residence when a new Club House was built in 1881. Above: Veterans playing billiards in the Club House

In addition to work assignments to keep them busy, the residents had a number of leisure pursuits available to them. An amusement hall provided games such as billiards, bagatelle (a table game resembling pinball) and bowling. Up until 1878, they had a Music Hall that allowed about eight hundred persons to gather for any public event or performance held on campus. When the population outgrew the original Amusement Hall, a Veterans Club House was constructed in 1881. In addition to the previously mentioned activities, the new building housed a social hall where residents could meet to play chess, checkers and cards, write letters, or visit with family and friends. The upper floors featured meeting rooms where various social groups and organizations of the Home could gather.

Left: The original Putnam Library and reading room. Below: examples of books sent by Mary Lowell Putnam to the Central Branch. Right: Portrait of Lt. WIlliam Lowell Putnam. Below right: the Patient Library that housed the thousands of books until the year 2000, when the Patient Library was closed.

The Library

Books, magazines and newspapers were not in short supply, thanks to the diligent efforts of Chaplain Earnshaw, who created the Home's library and served as its first librarian. Initially housed in the upper floor of the Headquarters, the collection of books grew to such a volume that it was moved into its own building in 1891. This was in no small part due the generosity of a wealthy Massachusetts benefactor named Mary Lowell Putnam, who donated thousands of books, pieces of art, and objects of interest for the Veterans' enjoyment. To honor her magnanimous donations, the library was named after her son, Lt. William Lowell Putnam, who had died in the Battle of Balls Bluff during the Civil War. At its peak, this library was touted as one of the best in the state of Ohio, with over 24,000 books in the collection.

Right: Father Charles S. Kemper (Chaplain from 1880 - 1902) was instrumental in the acquisition of a Catholic chapel for the Central Branch.

Below: Exterior of Chapel of the Good Shepherd, built in 1898.

Bottom: Original interior of the chapel. The ornate alter made of Italian marble was donated by John T. Barlow of Dayton.

Charles S. Kemper

Worship Services

If a Veteran wished to practice his faith while staying at the Home, that opportunity was afforded with Chaplain Earnshaw's weekly services in both the chapel and the hospital, Sunday school classes, and bible studies. As he was a Protestant minister and the only full-time permanent chaplain, it was necessary to contract the services of local Catholic priests to minister to the men of that faith. Protestants and Catholics shared the Home Chapel for a number of years, with Mass being held every other Thursday. After a petition by the residents in 1880, a full-time priest was finally hired, and Father Kemper set about securing funding and permission to build a Catholic church on the grounds. In 1898, the Chapel of the Good Shepherd was constructed, bringing his vision to life.

Entertainment and Special Events

The construction of the first "Memorial Hall" theater in 1878 allowed nationally-renowned individuals and shows to visit and perform for the Veterans, much to their delight. Unfortunately, two years later, the Hall was destroyed by fire. Not to be deterred, the Central Branch had a replacement theater built upon the same foundation as the former, and when it opened in 1881, it was considered magnificent by all accounts and compared to the best opera houses in the country. The auditorium could seat 1,500 people and was furnished and equipped with the best materials that were available at the time. Comedies, operas, minstrel acts and Shakespearean plays were commonly featured at the Home, and it was considered an important stop for the top shows as they toured the country.

Near right: handbill advertising a Home theater production. After Memorial Hall burned in 1880, Col. Brown had an enormous tent erected on the site so that scheduled activities could continue. This temporary venue "rose from the ashes" of its predecessor, and was thus named "Phoenix Memorial Hall Pavilion".

PHŒNIX

Memorial Hall Pavilion

SOLDIERS' HOME, DAYTON, OHIO.

THE NATIONAL SOLDIERS' HOME

DRAMATIC COMP'Y

MANAGER, ... BURTON ADAMS
STAGE DIRECTOR, ... GEO. F. BIRD
LEADER OF ORCHESTRA, ... MR. MAX. FEHRMANN
LEADER OF BAND, ... PROF. D. H. STUBBLEBEIN
SCENIC ARTIST, ... E. T. HARVEY
STAGE MACHINISTS, ... LEE N. CANNON and SAM. HENDERSON

Tremendous Success of this Talented Company!

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY!

Wednesday Even'g, July 21, 1880,

Will be presented, for the first time, the Thrilling Tragedy, in Four Acts, entitled

LUCRETIA BORGIA!

LUCRETIA BORGIA, ... Miss HELEN TRACY
PRINCESS NEGRONI, ... Miss HELENE ADELL
ALPHONSE D'ESTE, Duke of Ferrara, ... Mr. FRANK TANNEHILL
GENNARO (a soldier of fortune), ... Mr. BURTON ADAMS
MAFFIO ORSINI (his brother in arms), ... Mr. RAYMOND HOLMES
GUBETTA (a bravo), ... Mr. GEO. F. BIRD
JEPPO, ... Mr. JOHN F. WARD
APOSTOLO, ... Venetian Cavaliers, ... Miss ALICE BALDWIN
OLOFERNO, ... Mr. E. H. STEPHENS
ASCANIO, ... Miss AMY NORTHCOTT
RUSTIGHELLO, servant to the Duke, ... Mr. P. FAULKNER
Monks, by the Double Quartette.

To conclude with the Laughable Farce, entitled

BOX & COX

MR. BOX [the Printer], ... Mr. JOHN F. WARD
MR. COX [the Hatter], ... Mr. RAYMOND HOLMES
MRS. BOUNCER [the Landlady], ... Mrs. LOUISA MORSE

ADMISSION—Residents of the Home, ... Fifteen Cents
Non-residents, ... Twenty-five Cents
Children under 12 years, ... Fifteen Cents
Tickets for sale at the Home Store.

CARD.—Children in arms positively not admitted. Doorkeepers are instructed to allow none whatsoever to pass in.

CURTAIN RISES AT 8 O'CLOCK.

The Home Avenue Railroad will run trains to and from the performance. The last Car for the Home leaving the depot at Miami City at 7.30 p.m.

PRINTED AT THE NATIONAL HOME FOR D. V. S., DAYTON, OHIO

The first Memorial Hall, built in 1878.

The replacement Memorial Hall, built in 1881.

Memorial Hall stage

As a nationally prominent institution, the Central Branch frequently welcomed dignitaries of all sorts to visit the grounds. On these occasions, the Veterans would impress the visitors with military drill maneuvers on the parade grounds near the Headquarters building. This was usually accompanied by speeches from the Home officials and visiting dignitaries, followed by tours of the campus and celebratory meals. Guests hosted by the Home during the first decades included Generals Hooker and Sherman from the recently concluded war, and President Grant with his wife and daughter in 1871. In 1877, President Rutherford B. Hayes arrived to dedicate a new Soldiers Monument in the cemetery to the appreciation of a large audience of local citizens.

Veterans practice drill maneuvers before large crowds that gathered to see President Hayes visit the Home in 1877 (image: Harper's Weekly)

President Rutherford B. Hayes dedicated the Soldiers Monumument in the cemetery, witnessed by a large crowd of Dayton citizens (image: Harper's Weekly)

Holidays were times for rejoicing and were a welcome break from the usual routine of the Home. Festivities were planned, decorations went up, and special meals were prepared. One of the Home's largest celebrations was the Fourth of July in 1874. An estimated five thousand visitors came by excursion train, carriage, wagon and on foot to enjoy the spectacle of the day. The Veterans performed a comedic "Bummer Bridgade" drill followed by a Grand Review of all the war-worn soldiers on the parade grounds—an impressive scene comprised of many one-legged Veterans on crutches and others with only one arm, standing proudly at attention. Afterwards, a procession led everyone to the cemetery where several hundred men lay buried, representing every state in the Union. The Home Band played "America", an invited guest minister offered prayers, and Governor Brown introduced the main speaker. Following that ceremony was a variety of games that must have been something to behold: foot races among men with artificial legs, men missing an arm, and men on crutches. There were sack races, blindfolded wheelbarrow races, and a piñata-like game called "strike the bottle." As one news writer put it,

"Of racing there was a variety of damaged or hampered humanity, which covered all possible and impossible conditions of success, so far as speed was concerned."

The day was somewhat cut short by rain, however, no one's spirits seemed to be dampened. Visitors to the the conservatory greenhouse witnessed a night-blooming cereus plant unfurl its flower before their eyes, and the evening was concluded with a fireworks show as a grand finale. The day's activities raised over $1,700; enough to complete work on the Soldiers Monument yet to be adorned with four statues at its base.

Photo: Tessa Kalman

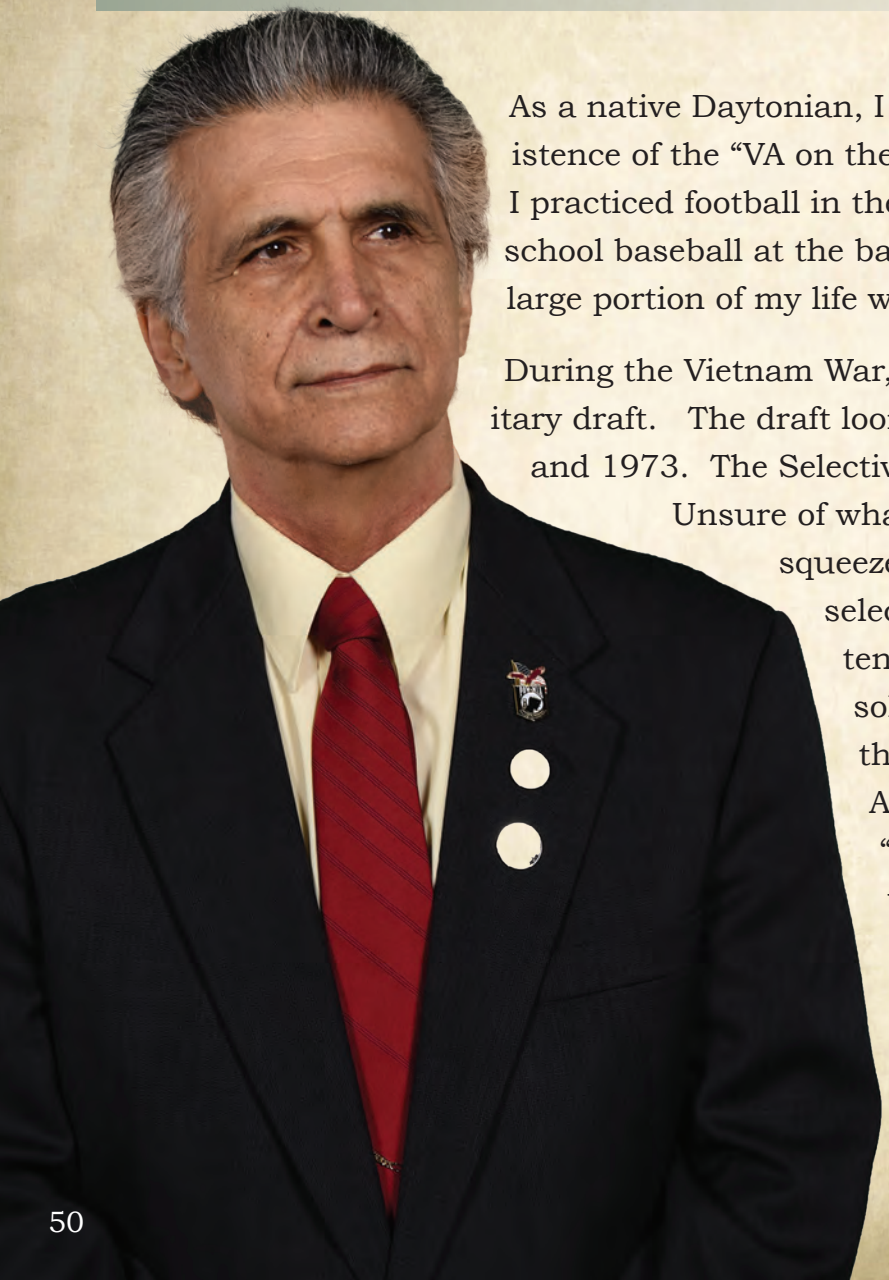

National Soldiers' Home,
CENTRAL BRANCH.
1776.
THE NATION TO HER DEFENDERS
THE NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS.
MARCH 3, 1865.
1888.
FOURTH OF JULY, 1888.
Mess Hall,—3,750 Members present.
Hospital,—126 Members present.
BILL OF FARE.
DINNER.
Roast Sugar-cured Ham. (1,500 pounds.)
Cucumbers. (150 dozen.)
Bread. (1,500 pounds.)
Sponge Cake. (650 pounds.)
New Potatoes. (45 bushels.)
Green Peas. (75 bushels.)
Butter. (200 pounds.)
Cheese. (300 pounds.)
Berries. (846 quarts.)
Lemonade. (700 gallons.)
Roast Lamb. (1,600 pounds.)
Worcestershire Sauce. (264 bottles.)
Biscuit. (1,000 pounds.)
Cookies. (625 pounds.)
PRINTED AT CENTRAL BRANCH, NATIONAL SOLDIERS' HO

NATIONAL SOLDIERS HOME.
DAYTON OHIO 1879

Our Veterans' Voices

Mark Kucharski

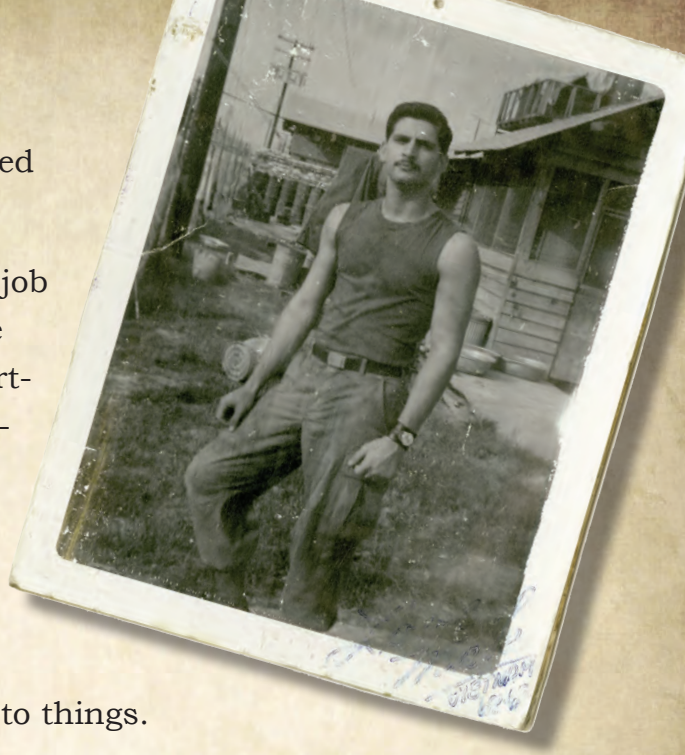
U.S. Army, Veteran of the Vietnam War



As a native Daytonian, I was aware of the existence of the "VA on the Hill" at an early age. I practiced football in the grass across from the old Thomas Hospital and played high school baseball at the ball field next to the National Cemetery. Little did I realize that a large portion of my life would be spent on the grounds of the Dayton VA Medical Center.

During the Vietnam War, the American home front was further disheartened by the military draft. The draft loomed over young men ages 18 to 26, between the years of 1964 and 1973. The Selective Service inducted an average of 300,000 young men each year. Unsure of what the future held for us, we tried to live life to the fullest and squeeze in as much as we could, as fast as we could. Once you were selected by the draft, your life changed forever. When the war intensified in 1968, the United States required an additional 100,000 soldiers on the ground as quickly as possible. We discovered that the course our lives took could be predetermined by someone else. A lottery system was established based upon your birthday. The "Luck of the Draw" was ever present in our minds as to how it would alter our fate in life.

As luck would have it, I received orders for Vietnam in October of 1968. It was difficult to say goodbye to my family and friends. I hoped for the best while mentally preparing for the worst. It proved to be a year that changed my life forever. I lost my best friend in February of 1969. This hardened my heart



towards ever making friends again and I put a wall up. There were men I worked side by side with and I didn't want to even know their names.

Upon discharge from the Army, I returned home to Dayton ready to get my old job back at the General Motors (GM) Corporation. I had been gone 3 years and the economy had since taken a significant downturn. So much so, that upon reporting back to GM, I was rehired and laid off all in the same minute. Newly unemployed, I searched for a job but found most to be unfulfilling. Upon the recommendation of a Veteran Service Representative, I applied for an engineering vacancy at that same "VA on the Hill." I was lucky enough to be selected for the position. One of the first assignments I received at the Dayton VA Medical Center was to demolish the same baseball field I played on in high school, and develop the area for gravesites. It was yet another example of how fate plays into things.

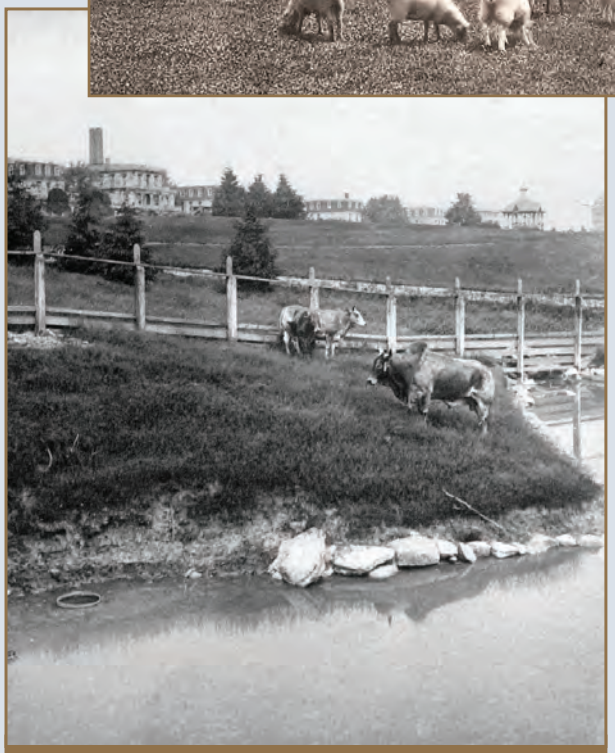
During my 28-year career at the VA Medical Center, I was fortunate to be instrumental in providing everything from basic supplies to specialized medical equipment to the Veterans. I realized I had a chance to make a difference in the care being supplied to Veterans. It gave me meaning and fulfillment; and I endeavored to be the best Advocate I could possibly be for them. I further pursued areas of interest pertaining to honoring local and national Veterans. I have served as the President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park Board in Dayton for the last 18 years and served in other capacities for the board for over 29 years. I am honored to say that this has been my greatest achievement in life. Remembering the 401 men inscribed on the black granite Ring of Remembrance is my mission each day. Vietnam Veterans need a place to honor their brothers and sisters who gave the ultimate sacrifice. To the community, it's a serene place to enjoy and reflect upon the honorable service these men and women gave to this nation. As the years pass, our history fades a little more in the minds of America, but the memorial will remain to tell our story. In the end, I will achieve an even higher honor as a Veteran. I will be buried among the bravest men and women in history in the Dayton National Cemetery, at the "VA on the Hill".

Chapter 3: The Soldiers Home Flourishes

By 1871, the United States had created four branches of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. The Eastern Branch in Togus, Maine, housed the first Veterans living in that region in 1866. The Northwestern Branch near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, opened the following May. The Central Branch in Dayton, officially established on March 26, 1867, opened that autumn. Three years later, a Southern Branch in Hampton, Virginia, was established, to benefit both tubercular patients in need of a mild climate and also former slaves from the South who had fought for the Union. Rapid growth and change were the hallmarks of the next several decades of the fledgling system.

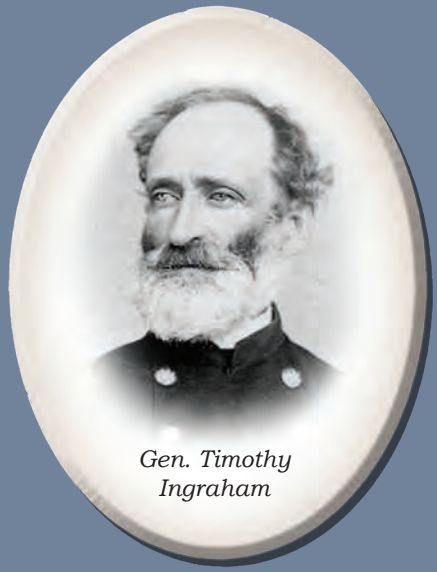
In accordance with the original Act that created it, the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was funded with money collected from fines levied against disobedient soldiers during the War and the salaries and pensions surrendered by deserters and those dishonorably discharged. At first, this was sufficient, but as the system was obligated to take on more Veterans, especially as they aged and could no longer care for themselves, the law was changed to fund the system with Congressional appropriations of tax revenue. Another important and much needed change for all the branches was the name. While the the word “asylum” was originally chosen

to convey a sense of safety and refuge, over time, it increasingly connoted a place where "undesirables" of society were shuttered away. In 1873, Congress changed the name to "National *Home* for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers" and for the next fifty-seven years, the organization's name was more closely aligned with its founders' original vision.



Above: the Home's flock
Below: Members of the Home's cattle herd. The band stand and barracks can be seen in the background

At the Dayton Soldiers Home, the original collection of barracks grew into an impressive campus and a largely self-sufficient community. With plenty of acreage, and more acquired as needed, the Home managed a dairy farm, a beef cattle herd, sheep and other livestock, vegetable gardens, a tobacco crop, and fruit orchards. The homegrown produce and meat supplemented the tons of food shipped to the Home from outside suppliers and provided many jobs for the Veterans who were still able to perform some labor. Although



Gen. Timothy Ingraham

What's in a Name...

The change in name from "Asylum" to "Home" in 1873 could have come at a more fortuitous time for the second Deputy-Governor of the Dayton facility. General Timothy Ingraham was appointed as acting commander of the Central Branch in the winter of 1867. When the General and a companion arrived at the downtown Dayton train station, he told his carriage driver to take them to "the Asylum." However, to the locals, that was the short name for the Southern Ohio Lunatic Asylum, and the driver promptly set off for that institution on Wayne Avenue.

Upon arrival, Gen. Ingraham was surprised to find the facility in such an advanced state, seeing as how construction was supposedly only a few months old. He requested to see the chief surgeon, and informed the perplexed doctor that he was the new commander in charge of the Asylum. After a few minutes of conversation, the doctor deduced that the companion had come to admit the delusional "general" for treatment, and after excusing himself, proceeded to arrange for Room 33 to be prepared for a new patient.

Eventually, the misunderstanding was cleared up, and Gen. Ingraham good-naturedly laughed about his close call. The change in name sixteen years later from National "Asylum" to "Home" surely helped a great many Central Branch visitors avoid a side trip to Wayne Avenue.

The first greenhouse at the Central Branch.
A florist by trade, Veteran Frank Mundt gathered vines and flowers from the local area and planted them among the stones and pathways of the Grotto. His efforts led to a formal gardening program that resulted in a spectacular display of floral perfection.

the scale of farming activity was an impressive feature of the Home, a surprising agricultural practice that called national attention to the Central Branch and to the city of Dayton as well…was flower gardening.

By 1884, the Dayton Soldiers Home reached its peak population of over seven thousand Veterans, and many could not perform the more rigorous duties of the Home. Some were employed to plant and tend gardens, or grow flowers and exotic plants in the Home's greenhouses. Word spread far and wide of the beautiful, ornate gardens that covered the grounds, and of the grotto springs that transformed into a summertime "tropical" paradise. The Home's reputation as a tourist attraction served to bring it attention in national magazines and newspapers, and railroad excursions were organized to bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to the home each year. The number of visitors peaked in 1910, totaling an astonishing 669,059. (Six times the population of Dayton at the time!) In years approaching the turn of the century, and for several decades afterward, the Central Branch could boast, as one advertisement claimed, of being the "largest attraction west of the Allegheny." Truly, the Soldiers Home helped to elevate Dayton into the national consciousness, and it remained a beloved jewel in the eyes of the Gem City for many years.

The Martindale Conservatory greenhouse was named after one of the original Managers of the Board.

The Visitors

Drinking from the famous grotto springs

When it became apparent that creating a idyllic home for war heroes would continue to attract large numbers of visitors, the administrators needed to find a way to cope with their guests. The challenges created by their presence were not insignificant, but keeping in the public's good graces was important. Aware of the needs of long-distance travelers, local Manager Col. Leonard Harris requested funding from the Board in 1879 to expand the size of the restaurant and provide overnight lodging. The Managers realized that citizens' interest in the care of their country's defenders was worth the cost and effort of accommodating their presence at the Homes. His request was approved, and the resulting hotel was one of many features created to welcome and attract visitors to the Dayton Home.

The written histories and articles from the time attest to numerous benefits the Veterans received from this great influx of visitors. Families of women and children came to thank the Veterans for their service and to admire their work in both labor and development of the grounds. Their appreciation was felt deeply by the Veterans and helped to alleviate boredom and break up the monotony of their routines. In this small community of disabled men, haunted by memories of war, the visiting families brought a sense of normalcy, along with recognition of all that the men had striven for, during the conflict and then afterward in the grand endeavor of becoming the model for Veterans Homes everywhere. The next few pages illustrate the remarkable number of features that catered to the enjoyment and convenience of tourists, and recreates how a visitor's photo album might have captured memories of a weekend at the Soldiers Home.

A Day at the Soldiers Home

Soldiers Home trolley

At the Home depot- our chariot awaits!

Strolling the immaculate grounds

A ride on the lake in the " McPherson"

A short rest on the porch of the barracks

Lunch was served at the restaurant

The summer house offers a good view of the grotto

The veterans enjoyed talking to us and posing for pictures

Beautiful moonrise over the lower lake and bridge

We spent the night here at the hotel. Mrs. Miller was a wonderful hostess and we will be sure to visit again.

"Beauties of the Soldiers Home"

Giant Agave

Tiger Mound

In the Conservatory

Lily Pond

Grotto Gardens & Lake

"The Menagerie"

Alligator Pond

Aviary

Veteran Feeding Black Bear

Deer Park

Organizations at the Home

The Home Band in the bandstand pagoda

The Home Band

Always present at noteworthy events at the Home was the talented collection of musicians comprising the Home Band. The group was initially organized by band leader Michael Miller in 1870 and continued for 62 years. They presided at every type of prestigious event that occurred: holidays, dignitary visits, meetings of the Board, parades at the Home and in downtown Dayton, and homecomings of local heroes, such as the Wright Brothers in 1909. One news account describes how special arrangements were made for a streetcar to pick up the band and take them downtown to so they could play the national anthem at the Liberty Bell's brief stop in Dayton in 1904. On frequent occasion, they would be called upon to provide the musical score for theatrical performances in Memorial Hall, for both local and national theater groups.

Members of the Home Band, 1891

Perhaps their most meaningful performances were those that provided the background music of daily life for their brethren at the Home. Every summer evening, the band would take up their instruments in the bandstand pagoda on the parade

grounds to serenade both Veterans and lingering visitors by the light of gas lamps until the final bugle call of the day. And every Veteran who passed away at the Home was carried to his final resting place in the cemetery accompanied by the band playing dirges in his honor.

Top right: Home Band at a Veteran's funeral. Top left: Band leading funeral procession. Bottom: The band accompanies Veterans during Grand Review.

Temperance Organizations and the Challenges of Alcoholism

In their yearly reports to the Board of Managers, the governors of the Homes lamented the ill effects of alcoholism on some of the residents. As former military men, accustomed to behaving by rule and order, the majority of the residents lived peacefully and followed the bylaws of the Home. However, a small percentage of them frequently became intoxicated to the point that they disrupted the lives of those around them, or became a danger to themselves. Daily records of the Central Branch are filled with accounts of Veterans "jumping the fence" in order to frequent the nearby saloons and bars that had sprung up around the Home. Aside from the problem of drunkenness, they often became victims of crime while intoxicated, or missed duty assignments as a result of the toll alcohol took on their already fragile health. The administrators demonstrated patience and compassion to the alcoholic men in their charge, understanding that many were introduced to the habit while in service, or used liquor to ease the difficulties of their post-war existence. A formal discharge from the Home required repeated offenses and an unwillingness to abstain.

The Driggs roadhouse of ill-repute near the Soldiers Home was known for selling liquor and other distractions to the Veterans. It belonged to two of the most notorious counterfeiters in U.S. history, Nelson and Gertrude Driggs. (Photo: Lutzenberger Picture Collection, courtesy of Dayton Metro Library)

In an effort to combat the scourge of alcohol addiction, two temperance organizations were formed, each with a slightly different method and focus. The Independent Order of Good Templars was a national organization whose members had dedicated themselves to the practice of abstinence from alcohol. The Central Branch membership maintained a Lookout Lodge, and it is said to

have saved many a resident from “a drunkard’s grave.” The other group, The Guardians, held the philosophy that each member would be a “guardian” of his or her fellow members (women were welcome to join), influencing each other to uphold high ethical and moral values, including the avoidance of intoxicating drink.

In 1886, the decision to establish a Beer Hall on campus was enacted by the Governor at that time, General Marsena Patrick. The purpose of providing beer onsite was to mitigate the danger to men visiting the local taverns which harbored both hard liquor and unscrupulous characters. The Home officials issued tickets to the men which they could exchange for pints of beer (no hard liquor was served), thereby controlling—to a degree—the quantity of alcohol consumed. Soon, the Beer Hall became a safer gathering place than the establishments just outside the gates. For a while, this seemed to have a positive effect on reducing the problems. However, not everyone in society agreed with the idea of the government providing alcohol to its dependents, and prohibitionist factions pressured the U.S. Congress to pass a law stating that any Home serving beer on its grounds would lose federal funding. This effectively closed the Beer Halls at all the Homes (Dayton’s closed in 1907), and the problems that they were meant to alleviate would quickly resurface.

Gen. Marsena Patrick, Governor from 1880 - 1888. A controversial figure in Home history, Gen. Patrick was a strict disciplinarian, and ruled with a firm hand. His methods did not win friends among the local media, politicians or many of the Veterans in his charge. In 1884, the hostility against his administration policies launched a Congressional investigation into management of all the Homes, including an exhaustive review of the Central Branch. At its conclusion, Gen. Patrick addressed the committee, stating, “I am a man of strong convictions. I fear God and him only. I shall not depart, while the little of life that is left to me shall remain, from the principles I have laid down all through my life for my guidance.” With the submission of the report by the committee, the matter was summarily dropped.

The Grand Army of the Republic

Often referred to as G.A.R., this national organization was formed shortly after the Civi War in 1866. Its main purpose was to provide a means for former soldiers to socialize and share the camaraderie they had formed during the war. Yearly "encampments" were held in various states where members could gather to greet old friends and elect new officers. It also became a powerful political body, and support of the G.A.R. was crucial for a politician to win a Republican party nomination. The group lobbied for Veterans' causes in Washington and championed patriotic events and activities within their home communities. Most states had a "Department of the G.A.R." consisting of individual Posts located throughout their cities and towns.

The Dayton Soldiers Home hosted Dept. of Ohio G.A.R. Veteran Post #5. In 1879, Chaplain Earnshaw was elected Commander-in-Chief of the entire national organization, and the next year, Dayton hosted the annual G.A.R. Encampment.

Commemorative Memorial Day ribbon for G.A.R. Post #5

Left: G.A.R. members gather outside the Veterans Club House, where they typically held their meetings. Right: the back of a hand mirror printed with an image of the "Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Earnshaw Camp." Formed in 1881, this auxiliary to the G.A.R. was named as its official successor and carried on its mission.

The Brown Guard

Around 1875, a group of older Civil War Veterans formed a military company named after their much-beloved Home Governor, Colonel Edwin F. Brown. This drill team performed military maneuvers at various events to showcase the marching and combat skills that soldiers had used during the war. In full-dress United States artillery uniforms and Army-issued breach-loading rifles, many of them performed the drills with a zeal and vigor that belied their age and physical limtations. Numbering about a hundred men—some shouldering a rifle with one arm and a crutch under the other—they relived their past glory days for visiting audiences, in keeping with the Home's goal of preserving the dignity and honor of its men.

Other Notable Groups at the Home

The police department. All Veterans of the Home, officers were designated with a special badge on their uniforms

The "Irish Gun Club"

The Home Fire Squad with a Maxwell auto and horse-drawn pump, 1913

The Mother Home

As the new century approached, the Dayton Soldiers Home already boasted a number of remarkable achievements. It had grown, despite aches and pains, to become the largest Veterans' facility in the world. With a stream of visitors, it was a tourist attraction rivaling any other in the region; it housed state-of-the-art medical facilities; and its rehabilitation and re-training programs successfully reintegrated thousands of injured soldiers back into their home communities. Veterans from the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Indian Campaigns, and the Spanish-American War were now eligible to join the ranks of the graying Civil War soldiers at the National Homes.

When the original hospital (at right) was built in 1870, administrators did not envision that the Dayton Home would someday house over 7,000 Veterans. The Annex (at left) was added to accommodate the additional patients, especially those suffering from epilepsy, blindness, mental illness and tuberculosis.

Nurses of Home Hospital, circa late 1800s.

Nurses' Cottage located just east of Home Hospital, built in 1906.

The aging of the Veteran population required changes in the infrastructure and the personnel employed at the home. As the majority of Veterans became too elderly to perform most of the daily duties, outside civilians were hired to take over the workload. The male nurses in Home Hospital were eventually replaced with trained female nurses sometime after 1891, and in 1909, women were hired to serve as waitstaff in the dining hall. In many cases, housing was built for these additional employees and the number of on-campus residences increased.

Throughout its existence, the location of the Board of Managers meetings had resided in a number of different cities, and by 1915, they were considering a permanent location for their headquarters. Dayton was the logical choice. By far the largest Home in the system, it was centrally located in respect to most of the country's population. All of the National Home system's publications had been printed there from the beginning, and because it had hosted a number of Board meetings, the Managers were quite familiar with the advantages of the site. One Congressman, about to embark on an investigative journey of all the Homes, stated it best: *"We come first*

Built in 1888, the unusual architecture of the Commissary & Quartermaster Building made it an iconic structure on campus and one one of the most photographed by tourists. The middle tower (at right) separated the commissary from the quartermaster departments. The Central Branch was a General Depot (meaning a distribution warehouse), supplying all the National Homes with uniforms for the Veteran members.

Providing housing for employees and officials of the Home was standard practice. Officials specifically mentioned in historical accounts as living at the Home: Governor, Treasurer, Secretary, Steward, Chief Surgeon, Chaplain, Adjutant, and Matron. Nurses were also provided with living quarters as well. Left: Governor's residence, located near the Deer Park. Right: Surgeon's and Chaplain's residences, located near Home Hospital.

to Dayton; because this is the mother Home, and because it has the most extended experience. It has the largest number of inmates; and whatever Congress has appropriated for the purposes of these Homes has probably worked out its natural fruits more completely at the Dayton Home than anywhere else."

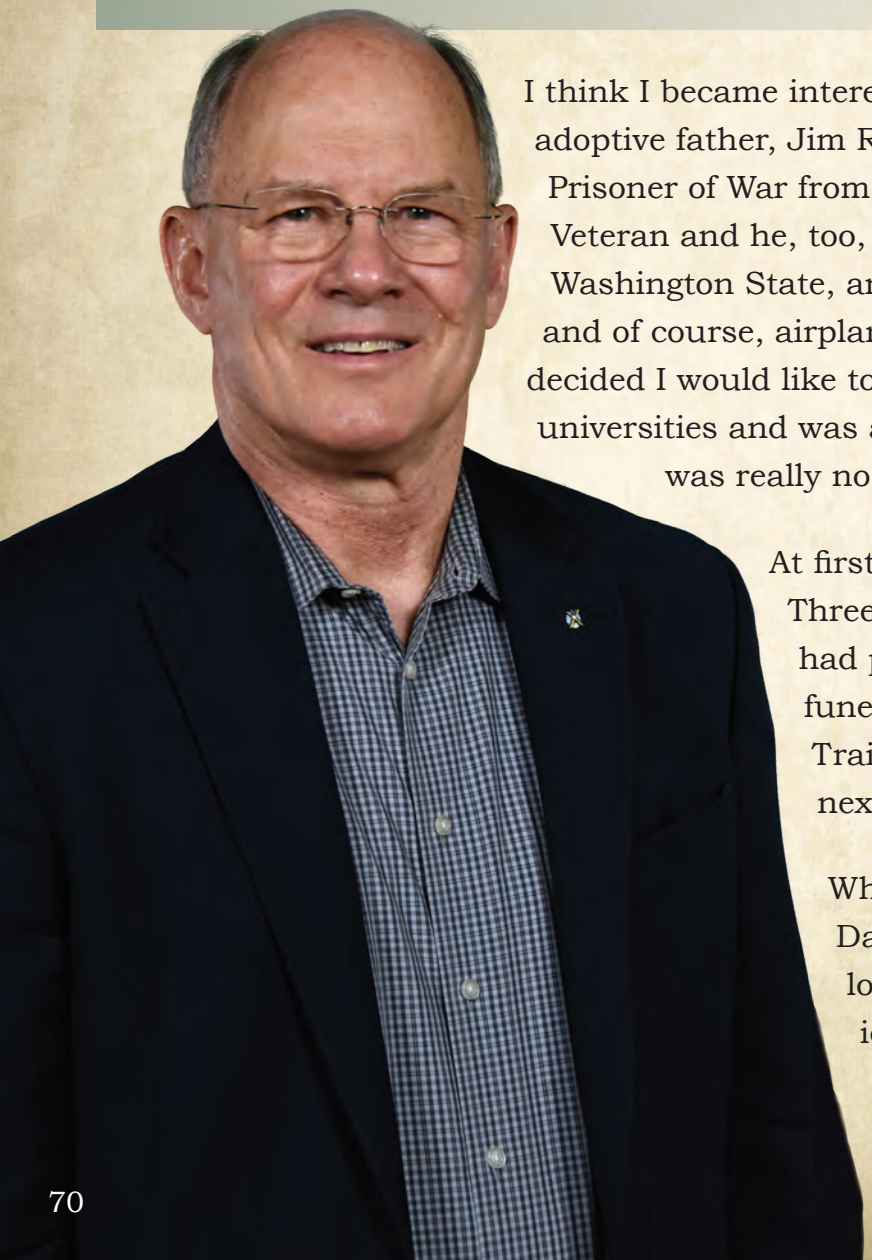
In 1916, the decision was made, and the Board's permanent headquarters were moved into the vacated Post Fund Building at the Dayton Soldiers Home. There they stayed until 1930, when major changes came to all government agencies and programs that oversaw benefits to American Veterans.

National Military Home, Central Branch, circa 1898

Our Veterans' Voices

Dick Reynolds

U.S. Air Force, Former Commander Aeronautical Systems Center and
Former Vice Commander of Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson AFB



I think I became interested in aeronautics at an early age. I was three years old when my adoptive father, Jim Reynolds, married my mother. He was a World War II Veteran and Prisoner of War from the Battle of the Bulge, and my grandfather was a World War I Veteran and he, too, was a POW. I grew up in a little logging town called Aberdeen in Washington State, and as a child, I was always interested in math, science, technology, and of course, airplanes and aviation. Around my sophomore year of high school, I decided I would like to go to the Air Force Academy. Although I applied to a number of universities and was accepted to several, when the Air Force Academy accepted me, there was really no question that I would go there. I entered on June 19th in 1967.

At first, my classes at the Academy were both exciting and terrifying. Three days after arriving at the Academy, I was informed that my mother had passed away unexpectedly. I went home for three days for her funeral and then went back to the Academy to start my Basic Cadet Training. I made it through that first intense summer, as well as the next four years, and graduated with a degree in Engineering.

While at the Academy, I met a girl on a blind date on the first Earth Day in 1970, and we ended up spending a lot of weekends together. I loaned her my car one cold winter night, and she lost control on the ice and rolled the car down a hill. It was a beautiful German-made sports car—I was traumatized by that. Well, I have been married to that girl for forty-six years now...

At my USAFA graduation and commissioning, my dad, my grandmother and three of my five sisters were on hand to watch. My wife and I went off to Oklahoma to Vance Air Force Base where I entered pilot training and joined Class 7301. I earned my wings and was reassigned to Vance as a training instructor for the T-38 advanced supersonic jet.

Around 1974-75, when the Vietnam drawdown was just beginning, I was reassigned to fly the B-52 Stratofortress Strategic Bomber at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane. I was made an Aircraft Commander and was assigned a crew—this was the first time I had been put in charge, and this is where I developed my leadership philosophy and my leaderhip style. We were very successful, and it had a big impact on me. Everything I learned about leading a 9-person crew applied later in my career as a senior officer, when I led 79,000 people at Materiel Command.

I was accepted into Test Pilot School at Edwards AFB, which was a very demanding training program. After graduation, I spent time in "Test Ops" and the "B-1A Combined Test Force", then transferred to Maxwell AFB and attended the Air Command and Staff College for a year. After graduation, I went back to Edwards where I spent 3 years in the "B-1B Combined Test Force". In August of 1984, I went out on a test mission with the Chief Test Pilot for Rockwell, Doug Benefield. The plane crashed—Doug lost his life and I became a paraplegic. The accident fractured my spine and I couldn't walk for six months. When I could finally walk again, I was ready to get back in the cockpit.

My family and I moved to Dayton when I was offered the position of the 4952nd Test Squadron Commander at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The rest of my military career would include positions as Program Director for several tactical and strategic weapons systems including the B-2 Bomber Program at Wright-Patterson AFB. I spent several years at the Pentagon, and as Commander of the Flight Center at Edwards AFB. Finally, I returned to Wright-Patterson as the Commander of Aeronautical Systems Center. I am now a retired 3-star General with 34-years of active duty in the United States Air Force. In retirement, I wanted to dedicate a third of my time to volunteer projects, and one in particular was the campaign to build a privately-funded Fisher House on the Dayton VA Medical Center campus. I am so happy to say we reached our fund-raising goal, and the Fisher House will become a reality, providing a place where a Veteran's family can stay while he or she receives care at the Dayton VAMC.

Dayton VAMC Fisher House

Chapter 4: A New Century

The Effects of WWI and Tuberculosis on the Dayton Soldiers Home

The sun parlor at the tubercular ward, Dayton Soldiers Home Hospital. (photo: National Archives)

Tuberculosis—commonly known at the time as "consumption" or "white plague"—ravaged Europe for hundreds of years. By the turn of the 20th century, it had spread across the ocean and become a significant health problem in the United States as well. When the United States entered the first World War in 1917, many draftees with undetected active tuberculosis (TB) infections slipped past the Army medical examiners and were admitted into service. According to estimates from the U.S. Army, 10,000 recruits entered active duty with undiagnoses tuberculosis—a crisis which worsened when another 5,000 contracted the disease during the war. In due time, contracting TB became the most common reason soldiers were discharged from military service. Many of these Veterans with TB ended up in government hospitals, and in October of 1917, they became eligible for care in the National Homes.

Of course, tuberculosis was not the only cause for admittance to the Homes. Trench warfare—including exposure to extreme weather conditions and chemical weapons such as mustard gas took a large toll as well.

Neuro-psychiatric cases were also quite common among these Veterans. This new patient population was primarily in need of hospitalization—not domiciliary care like their predecessors—requiring hospital administrators to quickly upgrade their equipment, facilities and staffing levels to accommodate them. X-ray equipment and technicians, clinical laboratories, dental departments, and TB specialists exemplify some of the modernizations they implemented.

One of the original TB annexes at the Home, located just east of Home Hospital.

World War I and the influx of an additional 500 Veterans from that era had a drastic effect on the Soldiers Home in Dayton. What was once just five brick barracks soon became an entire hospital complex, featuring its own mess hall and solarium. Three hospital wards were converted into specialized areas dedicated to treating patients with dormant TB.

The standard treatment of patients with TB at the time was to isolate them into designated tuberculosis wards, which often included open-air porches with plenty of ventilation and sunlight. The Dayton Soldiers Home treated TB patients in these converted spaces until 1922, when the number of tubercular patients had risen so high that a significant change was needed. That year they constructed a 250-bed hospital on the far southeast corner of the property (isolated far from any other structure)

The V-shaped TB annex can be seen near the bottom border of the photo; Home Hospital is at right.

Thomas Hospital was named in honor of Col. Jerome B. Thomas, Home Governor from 1888 -1907. He was also the Home's first Treasurer. The site is currently the Dayton Job Corp Center.

dedicated exclusively to housing and treating those afflicted with TB. Thomas Hospital, named after Colonel Jerome B. Thomas (former treasurer and fifth Governor of the Home), continued to treat TB patients until 1958, at which time antibiotics effectively conquered this dreaded disease. Now no longer needed, the hospital was closed and the property was sold at auction in 1960 to the University of Dayton, who proceeded to remodeled it into freshman dormitories and classrooms.

Geriatric Care

While the Home was experiencing an influx of younger Veterans from the first World War, the remaining majority of Home residents were Veterans of the Civil War and Spanish-American War. The Board of Managers were sympathetic to the stresses that new changes would bring, and so they ordered the governors of the Homes to separate the occupants of the barracks according to the conflict in which they had served—as quickly as possible but "without violent upheaval." In 1918, the average age of the Civil War Veteran was seventy-five, the Spanish-American Veterans averaged fifty, and the WWI Veterans were in their twenties. It was thought that the men would fair better living with their fellow war comrades, rather than to be randomly assigned to any open barrack space. One result of this policy was the establishment of the "General Franklin" and "Colonel Harris" barracks as exclusively "old men's homes."

The General Franklin Old Men's Home.

The advancing age of the Civil War Veterans required geriaric-oriented care. Dementia units in the hospital were enlarged as that illness became more prevalent among the residents. "Rolling chairs" were purchased during this time period to accommodate the less ambulatory Veterans, and a "snorers' barracks" was designated for the noisy sleepers from all the other quarters.

Medical Staff at the Home

As late as 1910, there were only six doctors, twelve nurses and twenty to thirty attendants in the hospital. These numbers increased over time, but very slowly. A 1919 official report for the Central Branch indicates that only seven doctors were employed during that year. Nursing staff wasn't included in the report, but the photo of the nurses from 1917 suggests their numbers had not greatly increased either. However, post-WWI changes brought about medical staffing increases and also initiated the construction of five duplex houses on the east side of campus that became known as "Doctors' Row".

Top: Colonel Harris barracks for older men. Bottom: The dining hall, located on the second floor.

CENTRAL BRANCH MEDICAL STAFF

Above: The physicians and nurses of Home Hospital, near the turn of the century.

Below: The administrative staff of 1917, including the Chief Surgeon (seated, third from left) and five Assistant Surgeons.

Above: The nursing staff of 1917.

A White Tale...

Col. William J. White Vs. An Angry Buck

Colonel White (at left) was a Veteran of the Civil and Spanish-American Wars and was the namesake of Dayton's former Colonel White High School. He was also the Governor of the Central Branch from 1912 - 1920. A Dayton Daily News article from 1921 recounts how the Colonel and a Capt. Donovan, while visiting the normally tame deer herd (at right), were suddenly attacked by a whitetail buck who was clearly agitated by their presence. Both men were seriously injured, and Colonel White is said to have never fully recovered from his injuries before passing away a few years later. It was reported that the deer herd became Thanksgiving dinner for the Home residents.

Infrastructure Changes

Water Supply

When the gates first opened in 1867, the Home's primary water supply came from the property itself. The largest of the lakes was the old stone quarry, which had filled in with natural spring water, and the smaller lakes were dug out by pick and shovel during the early years of the Home to serve as reservoirs. In 1877, with the greatly increasing Veteran population, the Home experienced a water crisis, and the existing lakes were dredged to make them deeper. Three years later, Home officials purchased a ten-acre tract of land east of campus to create an even larger lake. Water was also stored in cisterns, obtained from wells dug on the grounds, and in 1886 they began pumping water from the "Wagner Wells" (a well field located just east of the Home) to supplement the supply. In 1918, they began connecting areas of campus to the city water system and continued through 1939 when the transition to city water was complete.

Power

During the post-World War I era, the Home was using coal to generate steam power, as it had throughout most of its history. Freight trains brought coal directly to the Home and off-loaded at the power plant.

The "stand pipe" served as a water tower and was located on the south side of campus.

Coal was brought to the Home by rail and off-loaded near the power plant.

Speaking of that large lake…

Throughout the years, the Board of Managers fielded a wide range of complaints from citizens and business owners from the communities surrounding the Soldiers Homes. One notable case was that of a Mr. Vicroy, who demanded payment for damages because he accidentally had driven his horse into the large lake at the Dayton Home and it had drowned. The Board denied his claim.

Speaking of tunnels…

A special passageway at the Home—the Funeral Tunnel—connected the basement of the hospital to the cemetery. This provided a discreet means to transport deceased patients from the hospital morgue to their final resting place. Since the first days of the Home, Veterans were buried in grounds set aside in a shady grove, marked with wooden grave markers.

Natural gas was used for lighting from the beginning, and D-C electricity was generated onsite starting in 1885. The wires and pipes for all utilities of the Home: water, steam, gas, sewer, and electricity, were run to every part of the campus through an elaborate system of underground tunnels. In the early 1920's, Dayton Power and Light Company began to supply A-C power to the Home.

Transportation

One of the deciding factors establishing Dayton as the site of the National Home's Central Branch was easy access to a railway system. Union Station in downtown Dayton, located a mere 3.5 miles away, put the Home within a short wagon or carriage ride of the nearest train depot. From 1870 until 1872, horse-drawn rail cars brought people to and from the Home, until the Fifth Street Railway Company constructed a narrow gauge, steam-powered system—called a "dummy train"—that ran individual passenger cars from downtown Dayton to the Home grounds. As tourism to the Home increased, four small locomotive engines pulling a total of twelve passenger cars replaced the dummy train, significantly increasing transportation capacity. But by 1890, on the route between Dayton and the Home, the steam railways were now getting competition from electric trolleys—and losing. The steam companies were charging thirty cents for round-

trip train fare, while the new Dayton and Soldiers Home Railway electric-powered systems could charge as little as ten cents. Soon the steam railways were running mainly freight out to the Home, leaving passenger service to the electric trains.

During the 1870's, a train depot was constructed on the east side of the grounds where most of the Home's scenic attractions and the hospital were located. In 1917, a new trolley depot was constructed in the same general location. The freight trains brought supplies and coal to the facility on tracks that ran directly to the Commissary and the Power Plant. The trains continued to service the Home for many decades, before modern-day buses and trucks became the favored method of tranporting people and freight to the facility.

This 1917-era depot is located along Gettysburg Avenue. It was initially used as a trolley stop, then later as a bus depot.

The Fifth Street Rail Road Co. horsecar service

The horsecars were replaced in 1890 by the the "dummy" train, above. This was a passenger car with a steam engine hidden in a box that drove the rear axle. These small single cars couldn't keep up with the demand and were replaced by two small locomotives that pulled a total of twelve cars.

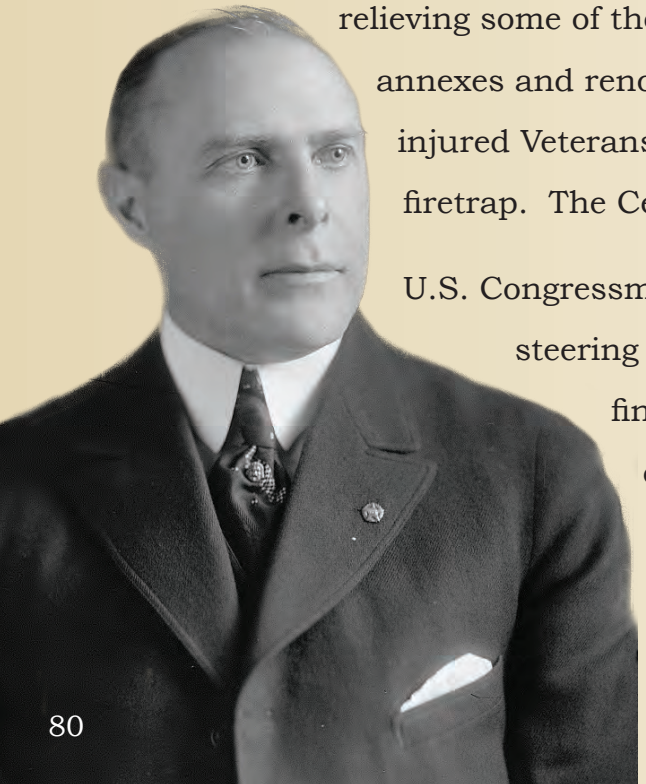
This example above from the Dayton & Western Traction Company (circa 1898) was an electric streetcar that could transport passengers to the Home at a much lower price than the dummy train, and soon put it out of business. These trolleys serviced the Dayton Soldiers Home for many decades.

A New Hospital is Needed

An artist's rendering of the Central Branch's replacement hospital. Like its predecessor, Home Hospital, it was touted as being a state-of-the-art modern medical facility. (Reprinted with permission from Dayton Daily News)

By the late 1920's, the Home was almost sixty years old and not only were many of the Veterans living there feeling their age, but so was the grand old Hospital. For many decades, it had admirably served the Civil War Veterans for whom it was built. However, as that population gradually passed away, and with new Veteran eligibility laws and the recent World War bringing younger Veterans into the system, the greater need for inpatient care required the hospitals to play a much more central role at the National Homes. Although the addition of Thomas Tubercular Hospital in 1922 went a long way in relieving some of the patient load, the antiquated Home Hospital—with its patchwork of additions, annexes and renovations—was not providing adequate modern medical care for the other sick and injured Veterans. Worse still, with its all-wooden interior and open wards, it was viewed as a firetrap. The Central Branch of the late 1920's desperately needed a new hospital.

U.S. Congressman Roy G. Fitzgerald is credited with championing the monumental effort of steering a $1.5 million hospital construction bill through a series of hurdles in Congress, finally to be signed by President Hoover in 1930. Dayton was awarded its new Soldiers Home hospital, and construction began at once. However, decisions happening in Washington, D.C. would soon affect the National Home system as a whole and the Dayton "Mother Home" in particular.



Roy G. Fitzgerald, a U.S. Congressman and attorney from Dayton, represented the interests of his constituents back home by spearheading a bill calling for a replacement hospital at the Central Branch in 1930.

The End of an Era: The Last Years of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers

The Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1917. At this point, they had moved their headquarters to the Central Branch. The gentleman seated in the front right is General George H. Wood, President of the Board, and native of Dayton. He would soon be called back into active military service when America entered WWI, and then rejoin the Board after the fighting ended. When the 1930 Veterans Administration consolidation moved all national-level leadership activities to Washington D.C., Gen. Wood was offered a position in the new organization as head of the Homes division. However, he was unwilling to leave Dayton and so he declined, but continued to serve the Veterans as a special representative of Soldiers Home activities at ceremonial events. *(Reprint permission from Dayton Daily News)*

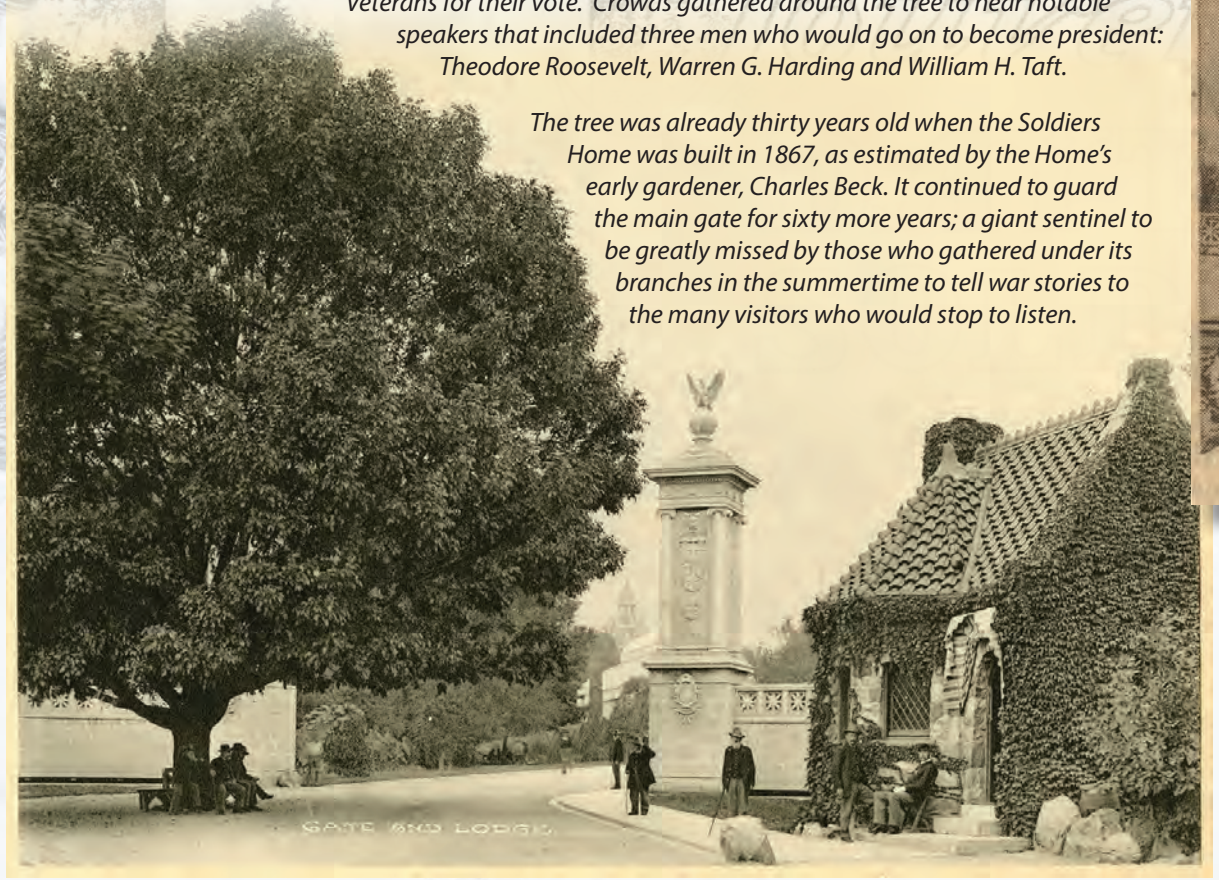
As the 1920's were coming to a close, changes were on the horizon for the organization of Veteran-related affairs. After WWI, a myriad of programs that oversaw Veterans' issues were scattered among various bureaus and agencies. This resulted in an often confusing, frustrating, and redundant system for Veterans to navigate. In 1921, an attempt at improvement came with the consolidation of all the WWI programs under a single agency called the Veterans Bureau. At that time, the Pension Bureau and the National Homes were left on their own as separate agencies, but in 1930, these last two were brought into the fold as well, and one overarching agency called the Veterans Administration was created during the presidency of Herbert Hoover. With this act, the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was dissolved, and the Central Branch—as the National Headquarters—bowed to progress, and management of the new Veterans Administration (or "VA") moved to Washington, D.C.

Death of the Soldiers Home Tree Symbolizes the End of the Era

Just as the national Soldiers Home organization came to an end in the year 1930, so did the magnificent ash tree that stood outside the main entrance to the Dayton Soldiers Home in December of that same year. Over the decades, it had been struck by wayward motorists that had damaged its bark, and just a few years prior, it had been struck by lightning, causing decay to set in that could not be halted. At the time of its demise, it was nearly a century old and very large, with branches spreading over 150 feet, according to a newspaper article covering the story. It posed a hazard if it were to fall of its own accord, and so in early December, workmen began the sad process of dismembering the mighty giant, limb by limb.

The tree was a well-known landmark in the Dayton area, not just because of its size, but because of its convenient and conspicuous location just outside the Home's gates. Because the Soldiers Home was federal property, no political speeches were permitted to be made onsite, so candidates running for office stood year after year just outside the gate on the east side of the tree and made their pitch to the Veterans for their vote. Crowds gathered around the tree to hear notable speakers that included three men who would go on to become president: Theodore Roosevelt, Warren G. Harding and William H. Taft.

The tree was already thirty years old when the Soldiers Home was built in 1867, as estimated by the Home's early gardener, Charles Beck. It continued to guard the main gate for sixty more years; a giant sentinel to be greatly missed by those who gathered under its branches in the summertime to tell war stories to the many visitors who would stop to listen.



At left: The Soldiers Home tree where it grew outside the main entrance to the Home, also known as "Anderson Gate" (circa early 1900's). The gate's namesake, Gen. Charles M. Anderson, was a member of the Board of Managers from 1894 to 1908 and was simultaneously the local Manager of the Central Branch.

Above: Dayton Journal news article photo of workman cutting down the tree in early December, 1930. (Reprint permission from Dayton Daily News)

Home Staff, 1900 - 1930 Era

The dining hall ladies in 1930.

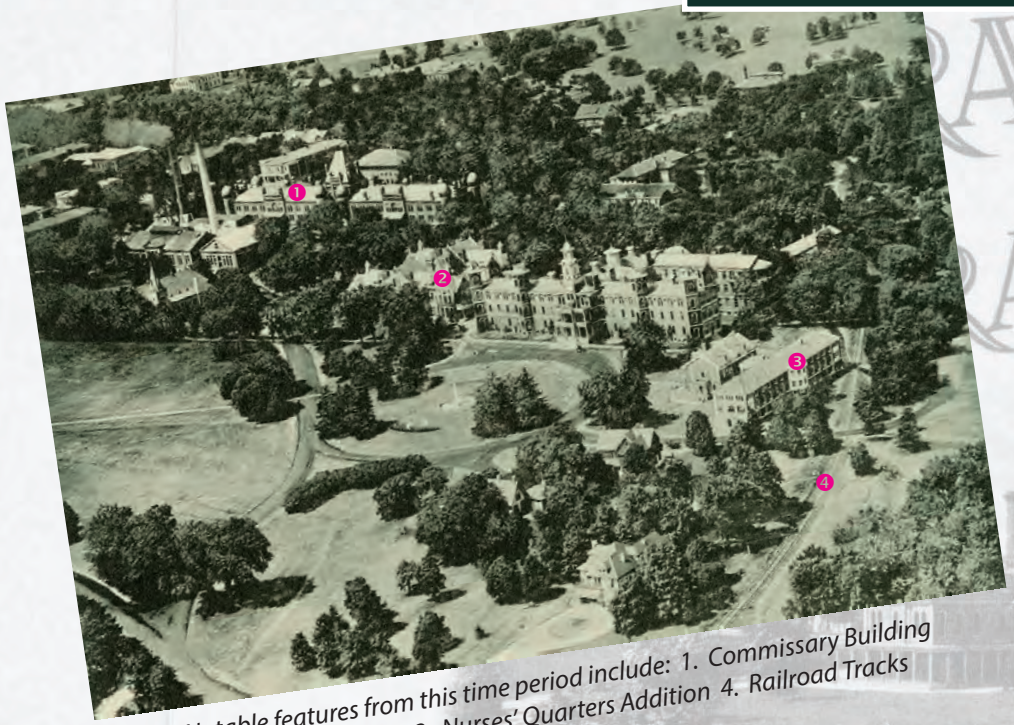
Col. Fred J. Runkle (standing, back left) looks on while Congressman Roy Fitzgerald (seated, center) and others take notes on claims and pensions.

Father Bernard Kuhlman was the longest-serving chaplain at the Home, from 1903 until 1936.

Col. Fred E. Bury was a popular Home Governor from 1920 - 1921 and his sudden, unexplained removal came with some controversy; an article in a local newspaper called for an investigation into the Board of Managers and criticized its President, Gen. Wood, in particular.

Col. Fred Runkle was Home Governor from 1922 - 1934.

Campus Scenes, 1900 - 1930 Era



Notable features from this time period include: 1. Commissary Building 2. Hospital Annex 3. Nurses' Quarters Addition 4. Railroad Tracks

Top: The officers' residences and a cannon on the adjacent parade ground.
Bottom: the duplex houses known as "Doctors' Row".

Looking west down barracks-lined Kentucky Avenue towards Colonel Harris Old Men's Home at the far end.

Campus Scenes, Circa 1930

The North Gate Guard House on the corner of Third Street and Gettysburg Avenue (today it is on the grounds of the Dayton National Cemetery).

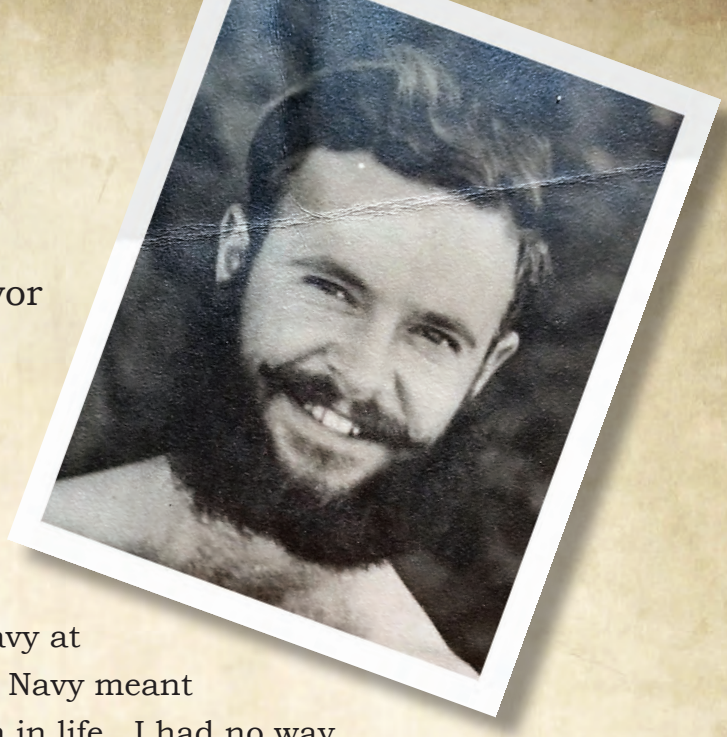
The pillared front porch of General Franklin Old Men's Home

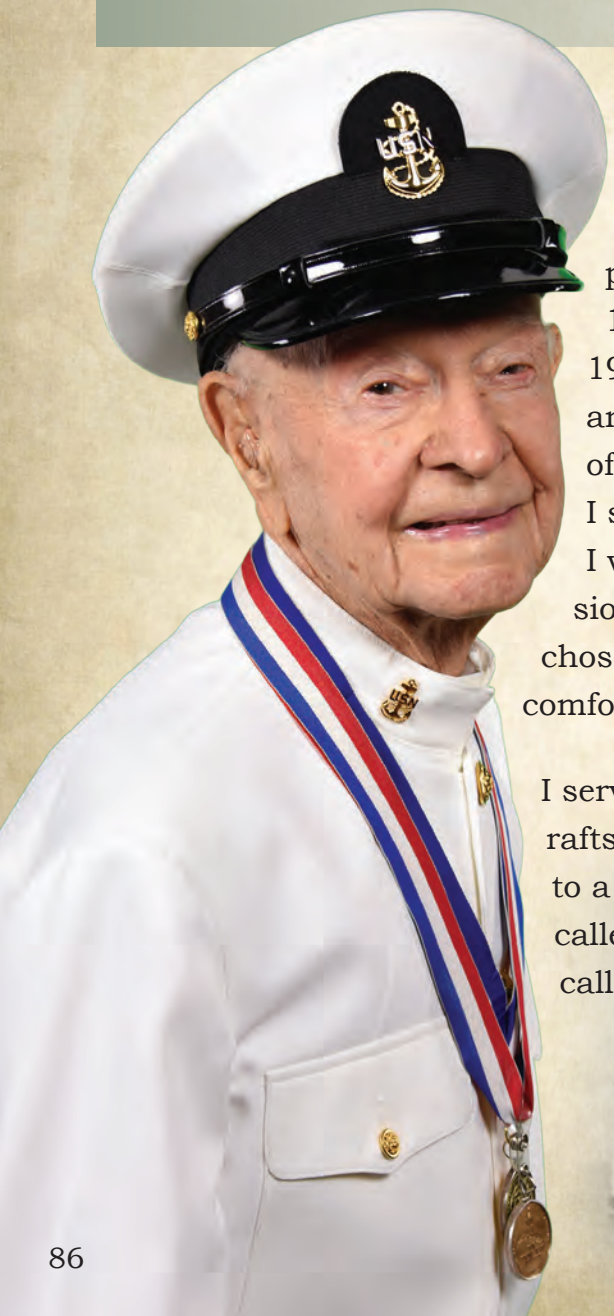
Headquarters, housing the offices of the Governor, Treasurer, Secretary and Steward.

Our Veterans' Voices

Frank Ruby

U.S. Navy, Veteran of WWII and Pearl Harbor Attack Survivor

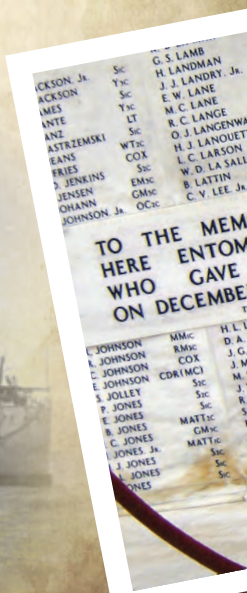




I was born in Piqua, Ohio on November 1, 1917. The Great Depression had a significantly negative impact on my family. On September 8, 1936, I enlisted in the United States Navy at 19 years of age. The decision to join the Navy meant an entire change from what I had known in life. I had no way of knowing whether it be good or bad, I just knew it would be different. I spent 9 years in the Navy and then afterwards went into the refrigeration business. I was always fascinated with the idea of making ice and it seemed a natural progression at the time. I have often wondered how different my life would have been if I had chosen to stay in the Navy. I could have retired in 1956 with a sufficient pension to live comfortably for the rest of my life.

I served aboard the U.S.S. Argonne as a second-class seaman where I built target rafts for gunnery practice. I was sent to Honolulu in 1941 where I was assigned to a fuel oil supply ship to the fighting ships of the Pacific Fleet. This barge was called Y.O. 30. After a while, I was transferred to a newer oil barge which was called Y.O.L. 2.

USS Argonne



USS Boreas

On December 7th, 1941, we were docked alongside several submarines in Pearl Harbor with a full cargo of 100,000 gallons of octane gasoline and another 50,000 gallons of diesel oil. The Japanese attack came in the morning hours and I was awakened to such horrific sounds that I asked myself if this was the end of the world – was this Armageddon?

I watched a torpedo plane fly over us when one of my shipmates said he thought it was another practice. My answer to this was, "Then this is very grim practice!" Several more of the torpedo bombers went on to finish sinking the battleship "Oklahoma". At 8:08 AM, the Oklahoma capsized approximately 12 minutes after she was hit by the first torpedo. With the noise of the explosions and the sound of machine gun bullets flying by, we decided that floating on a ticking time bomb full of diesel oil and fuel was not the best place to be. We made it to the dock and watched the devastation through black smoke and flames.

According to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, the Japanese attack killed 2,343 Navy Sailors, Marines, and Army Air Forces Airmen. An additional 1,272 were wounded and 960 were listed as missing. More than 150 U.S. aircraft were destroyed and 18 warships were severely damaged or destroyed. The highest totality rate was with the sinking of the Arizona, where 1,177 of the 1,512 men aboard the ship were killed. The National World War II Museum reports more than 40 of the dead were from Ohio.

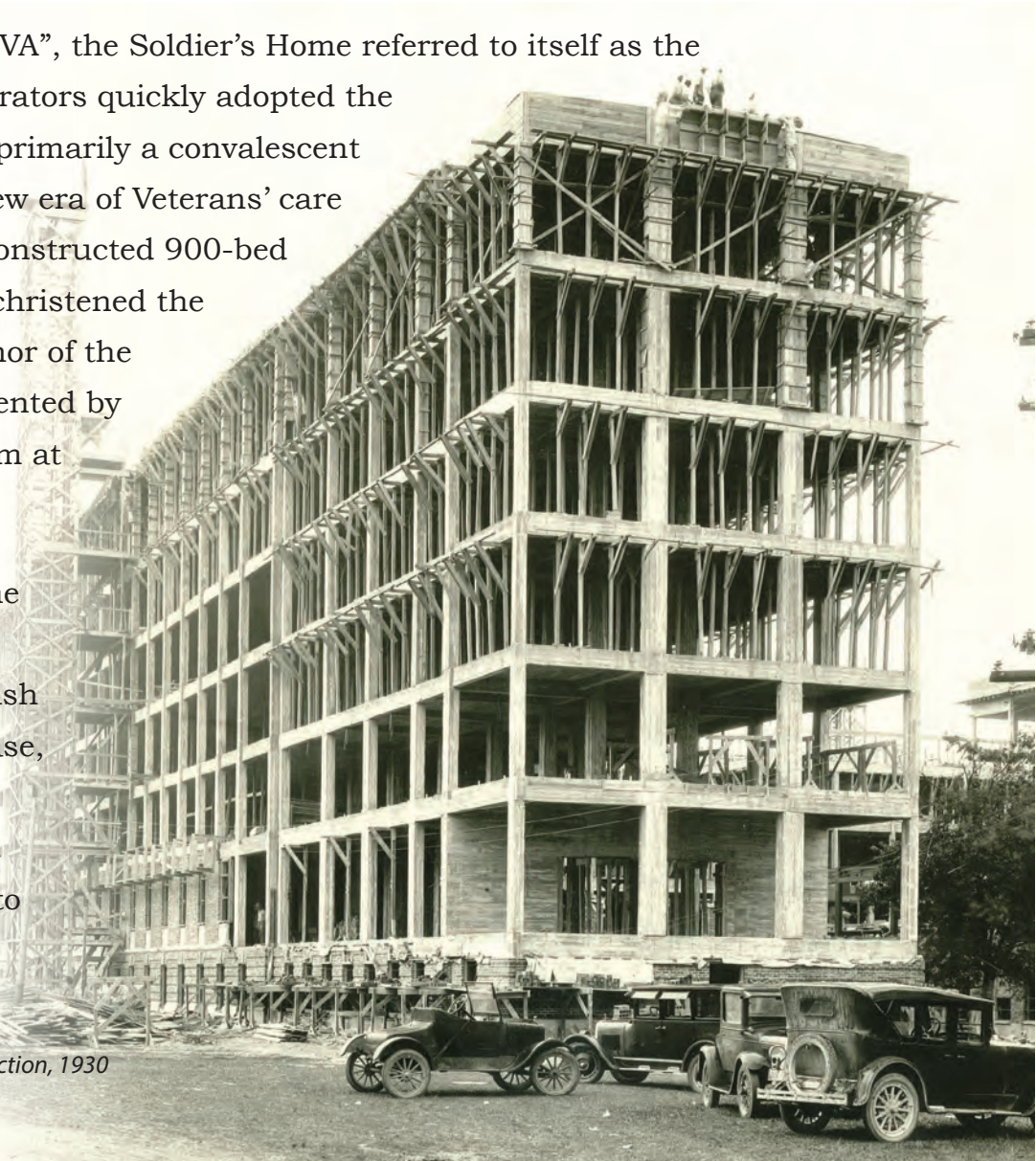
Some of us who survived the horrible ordeal on December 7, 1941 later felt the same shock and outrage on September 11, 2001 when we were again stunned and angered by a devastating surprise attack against America. As I remember Pearl Harbor, I usually have the same summation when talking about the attack – "We all gave some; some gave all". There are only two people who will give their life for you, that is Jesus and a military man. The real heroes are still out there. Remember Pearl Harbor and God Bless America!

Chapter 5: The Veterans Administration

A New Hospital for a New Era

For the first year under the new organization called the "VA", the Soldier's Home referred to itself as the "Veterans Administration Home." However, the administrators quickly adopted the more modern title of "Facility", to shed its reputation as primarily a convalescent home for elderly Civil and Spanish War Veterans. This new era of Veterans' care was celebrated in Dayton with the unveiling of a newly constructed 900-bed state-of-the-art medical and surgical hospital. This was christened the "Edwin F. Brown Hospital" in 1931, after the first Governor of the Home, and a painted portrait of Colonel Brown was presented by his descendants—including two of his sons—to honor him at this special dedication.

With the inpatients transferred to the new building, Home Hospital's wards were transformed into living quarters resembling the other barracks. While the Civil and Spanish War Veteran population at the Home continued to decrease, new demands for the care of WWI Veterans kept the old building open and operational. However, within the next decade, this building would be vacated and converted into a storage facility, which would prove to be a fortunate decision, as revealed in the next chapter.



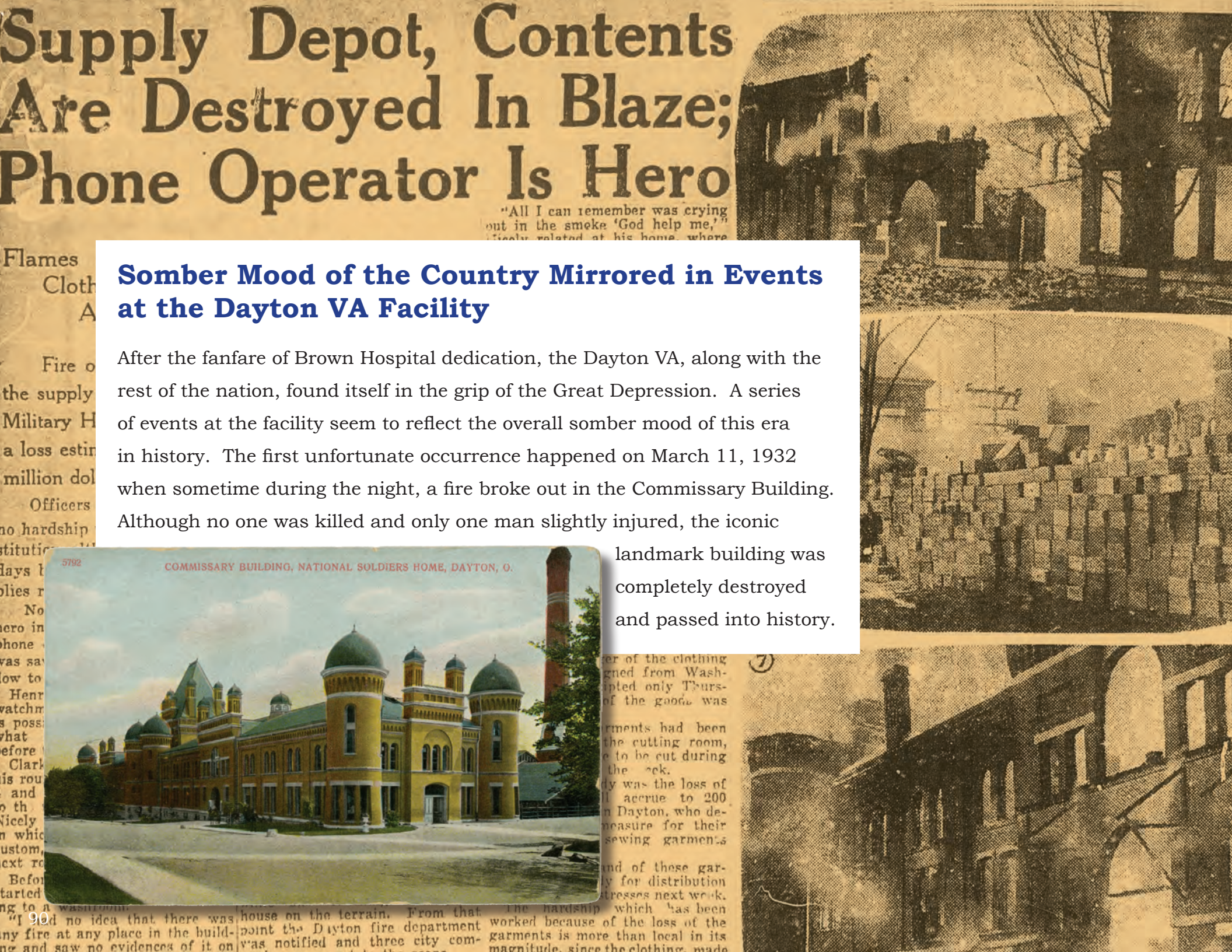
Brown Hospital construction, 1930

The Dedication of The Edwin F. Brown Hospital

Upper left: Judge O.B. Brown, son of Col. Edwin F. Brown.
Upper right: the new Edwin F. Brown Hospital.
Lower left: Gen. George H. Wood, Special Representative of the VA.
Middle: a crowd gathered in a shady grove for the ceremony.
Lower right: Congressman Roy G. Fitzgerald.
(Images: Reprinted with permission from Dayton Daily News)

Above: Portrait of Col. Edwin F. Brown, namesake of Brown Hospital, painted by a Veteran and presented at the dedication by his son, Oren B. Brown.

Below: postcard of Brown Hospital; an example of typical VA medical facility architecture of the 1930's.



Somber Mood of the Country Mirrored in Events at the Dayton VA Facility

After the fanfare of Brown Hospital dedication, the Dayton VA, along with the rest of the nation, found itself in the grip of the Great Depression. A series of events at the facility seem to reflect the overall somber mood of this era in history. The first unfortunate occurrence happened on March 11, 1932 when sometime during the night, a fire broke out in the Commissary Building. Although no one was killed and only one man slightly injured, the iconic landmark building was completely destroyed and passed into history.

Below: The remains of the Commissary on the following morning, March 11, 1932. Firemen speculated that an electrical spark may have ignited highly combustible drugs stored on the second floor.

NOTE: The building was designed by famous New York architect Stanford White. According to a 1932 *Dayton News* article, White was murdered in 1902 by Harry Kendall Thaw, heir to a Pittsburgh mine and railroad magnate, allegedly over White's affair with Thaw's wife. The scandalous trial that followed was dubbed "The Trial of the Century" by the New York newspapers.

depot; No. 4—Another view of the east side, photographed at 6:45 a. m., while the interior was a seething inferno; No. 5—Part of west wall shortly after it collapsed; No. 6—Some of

(Images: reprinted with permission from Dayton Daily News)

1932 aerial view of the facility and notable structures: 1. Brown Hospital 2: Dairy barn 3. General Franklin Barracks 4. Stand pipe 5. Bandstand & Parade grounds 6. Lakeside Park 7. Headquarters 8. Hotel 9. Memorial Hall 10. Protestant Chapel 11. Catholic Chapel 12. Former Home Hospital 13. Colonel Harris barracks 14. Cemetery and Soldiers Monument

The 1933 Economy Act, legislated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had a profound effect on the population of residents and staff at the Facility. In an effort to make good on his campaign pledge to balance the national budget, provisions of the Act cut many of the benefits to WWI Veterans, especially in domiciliary (residential) care. By that spring, approximately 1,600 who didn't have a service-connected disability were no longer eligible to live at the Dayton VA. They either returned to their local homes or relatives to live, were given train fare for traveling to a residence out of town, or if they had no where to go, were turned out to the county family welfare agency.

Another provision of the Economy Act cut the salaries of the federal workers at the facility, and due to the reduced domiciliary population, staffing levels were cut as well.


SCENE AND PRINCIPALS IN SLAYING AT SOLDIERS' HOME

Scene of the slaying of Col. Vernon Roberts, chief medical officer of the National Military home, and principals involved in the affair, are shown here. No. 1, Mrs. Roberts, who narrowly escaped being shot after her husband was killed. No. 2, the Roberts home in the grounds. No. 3, James D. Shadbolt, who fired the fatal shots. No. 4, Charles Yost, driver of the taxicab which took Shadbolt to the home. No. 5, Col. Roberts, head of the home hospital since 1925.

Right: The stresses brought about by the Economy Act were speculated to be a contributing factor of a tragic event at the Dayton VA in June of that same year. A Spanish War and WWI Veteran, claiming "he had been kicked out of the Home and had his pension cut", apparently hijacked a downtown taxicab and made the driver take him to the VA. Once there, he claimed to have been "directed by voices," to shoot and kill the Chief of Medical and Surgical Services, Colonel Vernon Roberts, in front of his residence on the grounds. The Veteran was quickly captured, found to be insane by a special jury, and sent to the state hospital for the criminally insane in Lima, Ohio. The murder made front page news in Dayton. *(Reprinted with permission of Dayton Daily News)*

in 1937, Post 359 of the American Legion was established at the Dayton VA Facility and named after the slain Chief Medical Officer.

Colonel Spofford's Grand Improvement Plan

To reflect the modern nomenclature of the new VA organization, the Dayton facility was now headed by a "Manager" rather than a "Governor," and taking over the helm in 1934 was Colonel Charles W. Spofford. Under his administration occurred the most extensive building program since the initial construction of the Home. From 1936 to 1941, several million dollars were spent in upgrades to the Dayton Veterans Administration Facility.

Col. Charles W. Spofford

Indicators suggest that before Col. Spofford arrived, the Facility's physical features of both buildings and landscape were in a state of decline. No longer were there thousands of relatively able-bodied men in residence, capable of keeping up with an entire park of ornate flower gardens, the tropical grotto, and a complex of greenhouses. A newspaper article from the mid-1930's describes how Col. Spofford initiated a "floriculture contest" among the barracks' residents, with the prime goal to help beautify the grounds. Articles mention how Memorial Hall, once a shining showplace, had fallen into disrepair, with the balcony condemned and the exterior described as "architecturally ugly." Fortunately, it is also written is how the "once-famous grotto, now entirely changed in character through removal of the various small ponds and with a charming rock wall at one side, is again a thing for admiration."

By 1936, Col. Spofford received funds from the national Veterans Administration to improve the facility with an initial $1.35 million building plan to replace many of the 1800's-era buildings. His dream of creating a modern medical care facility was about to come to fruition, but many of the structures that had made the place uniquely a "soldiers home" were to meet the wrecking ball.

Left: Col. Spofford awarding the Manager's Cup Floral Contest trophy to the winning Company sargeant. Each year, the Companies would plant flower beds around their barracks and judges were brought in to determine the winners. These judges were listed as: Guido von Webern, "enthusiastic floriculturist"; John Siebenthaler, "landscape gardener"; and E. Lee Ferguson, "retired executive of the National Homes."

Right: The Manager's Cup was briefly lost to history and then reappeared decades later, when a vault in the original Headquarters Building was opened in 2014. Apparent from its internal contents, the room-sized vault was sealed in the 1970s. When it was opened, the cup was found on a high shelf, untouched for nearly forty years. The front and back are inscribed with each year's winning Company.

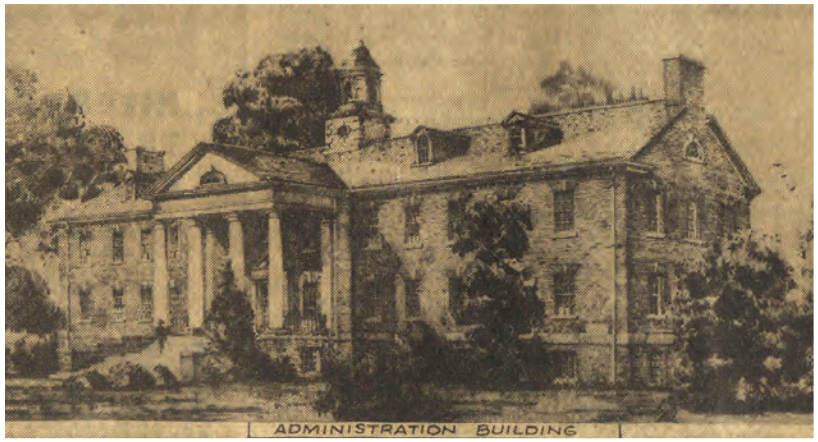
One of the judges associated with the contest was Guido von Webern, an immigrant and first cousin of the famous Austrian composer Anton Webern. As an "enthusiastic floriculturist," he cultivated a flower from a rare plant that he had found on his property in Dayton. He sent a specimen to the Montreal Botanical Garden, where it received the name "Sanguinaria canadensis multiplex"—the "double bloodroot"—and from there, its propigations became a favorite with horticulturalists world-wide, even to this day.

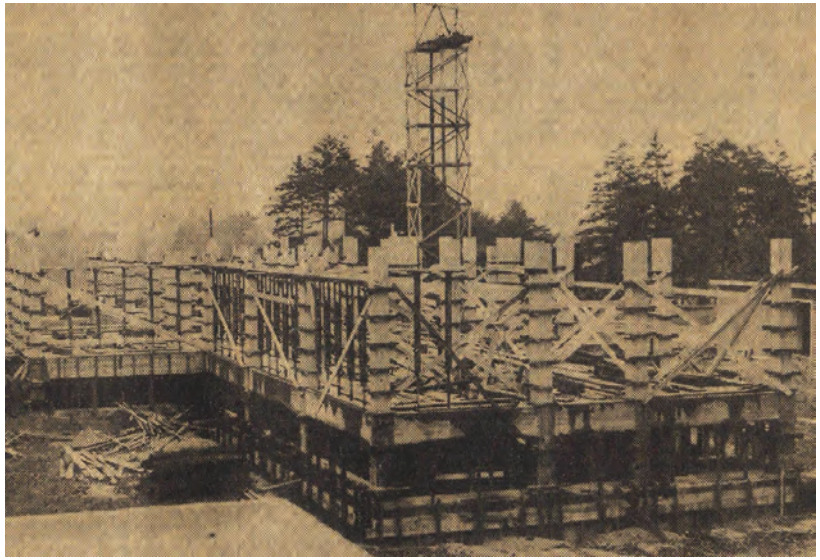
Flowerbeds of "Company Six"

Landscaping and grounds beautification efforts in the 1930's

The Administration Building

The first of the major construction projects was a new Administration Building. National VA leadership planned to move regional administrative offices in Cincinnati to Dayton—relocating about one hundred people—which would require a large building. The Dayton VA was to become "a regional field station, affording every type of relief provided for Veterans by the federal government," according to *The Dayton Journal*. Though the name may have been





Left: Head of the Veterans Administration, Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, dedicates the Administration Building at the cornerstone-laying ceremony by placing a time capsule in the partially-completed structure on Oct. 31, 1936, as Col. Spofford looks on. The Colonel amused the crowd with his declaration that "a thousand years from now, someone will take this box from its resting place." Top: Architect's rendering of Administration Building, circa 1935. Bottom: Construction of Administration Building.

(photos: *Reprinted with permission of Dayton Daily News)*

lacking in creativity, the structure itself is an impressive red brick Colonial Revival design with a cupola and column-adorned entranceway. The construction was completed in 1937, and its commanding location atop a hill along the main entrance drive placed it, perhaps not coincidentally, directly in front of the “architecturally ugly” Memorial Hall, effectively hiding it from view.

The Administration Building in 2017.

photo: Tessa Kalman

Top: The first "Miller Cottage" was the former hotel. Middle: Architect's 1936 rendering of new Miller Cottage (courtesy of Dayton Daily News). Bottom: Miller Cottage in 2017, leased to the Volunteers of America to use as transitional housing for homeless Veterans. (photo: Ray Kummer)

Miller Cottage for Women Veterans

Though women had served in some capacity in every American conflict, the formation of the Nursing Corps as an auxiliary of the Army during the Spanish-American War is generally recognized as the event that established women as a formal part of the military. By a long overdue measure, Congress finally extended Veterans' benefits to females in 1928. At the Dayton Soldiers Home, these former Army nurses were first housed in the old hotel, which had been vacated by the Board of Managers upon its dissolution. In honor of the Home's long-time Matron and the first woman to receive a commission in the U.S. Army, Emma L. Miller, their residence was named Miller Cottage.

At first, the "cottage" housed approximately forty women, but in 1931 that number significantly increased when about thirty women were transferred to Dayton from the Danville, Illinois facility.

By 1938, the modified hotel was suffering from structural and safety

concerns, and becoming overcrowded with increasing numbers of Spanish-American War nurses gaining admission as they aged and needed geriatric care. Subsequent years would bring to the VA former nurses and female yeomen from the Navy, and military field clerks who had served in the first World War. The new $300,000 building could accommodate eighty-three women and was completed on January 31, 1938. It was described as a "modified Colonial architecture with tall white columns on the front porch, lending a southern plantation appearance." Once the women were moved to their new home in March of that year, the original Miller Cottage/hotel was torn down.

Left: Navy yeomen (f), circa 1917.
Above: Army Nurse, circa 1914. (Library of Congress)

Women Veterans at the Home

These excerpts from a historical account written around 1939-40 describe what life was like for women Veterans living at the Home at that time:

"The present cottage is a large red brick building with three main floors and a ground floor. The dining room, kitchen, trunk room, laundry, beauty parlor, and employees' restrooms are situated on the ground floor...The members find the beauty parlor with its modern shampooing and drying equipment quite a joy and often help each other in those processes. A barber also comes in once a week for hair cuts...

There are on the north and south ends of the building screened-in porches with comfortable porch furniture. These are a source of much pleasure to the members when the weather permits their use. The front porch with its red brick floor, white pillars, and low swinging ceiling light gives a warmth of welcome to any one coming in, especially is this true at night, as the light shines and swings in the breeze...

Besides the bedrooms occupied by the members, there are also the Matron's living quarters and offices. The Doctor's room is also well equipped, and each morning a doctor calls between designated hours and members may report for medical care...

There are also three living rooms, comfortably furnished. Reading material and games are enjoyed a great deal, and the different members often visit in groups or listen to the radio...Quite a bit of freedom is enjoyed by the members. The street car line is very convenient to the cottage, and their trips to town are often quite a lot of pleasure. There are nice walks over the grounds when the weather permits..."

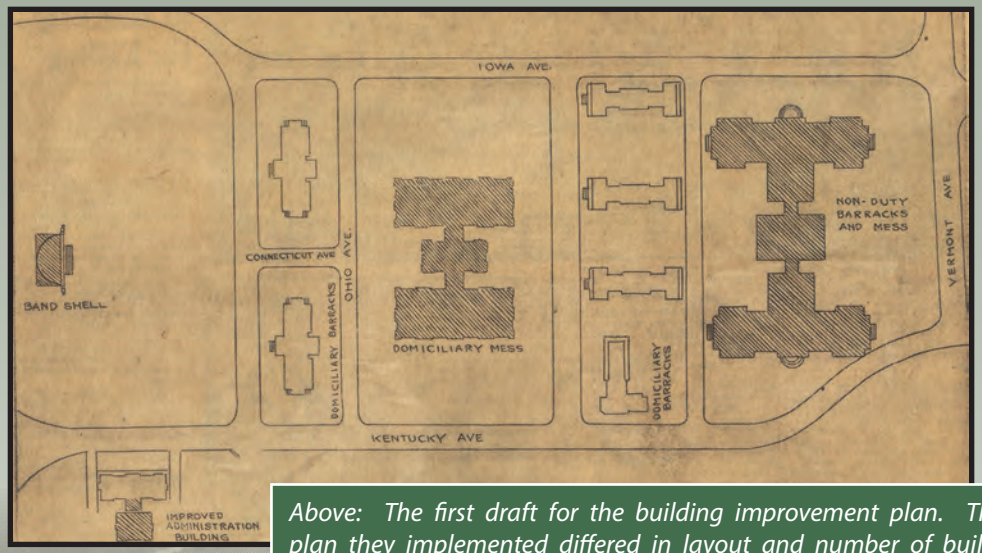
The New Dining Hall, Kitchen and Barracks Complex

From the beginning of the Home, the task of efficiently feeding thousands of Veterans three times a day, every day, was never simple. Coordinating the preparation of food, setting the tables, serving food in shifts, clearing the tables, resetting them for the next shift— a never-ending cycle—was more difficult when the dining facility was too small and required more shifts. During Colonel Brown's time in the early years, the homestead barn had been used as a dining hall, with additions built around the sides—to shore it up as much as to add space. In 1874, the barn was torn down and a proper hall with attached kitchen facilities replaced it. Appropriately called the "Grand Dining Hall," it was a two-story structure with high ceilings and enough space to feed 1,100 at one sitting. Yet in the following decades, as the Home's population grew beyond all expectations, even that hall was not large enough, and another one, called simply the "New Dining Hall," was added in 1891.

Top: the original barn that became the first dining hall. Bottom: detail from 1898 lithograph; the large red building in the center is the Grand Dining Hall; the smaller tan building just to the right is the New Dining Hall.

By the mid-1930's, about forty-five years had passed since the New Dining Hall was actually new, and the peak resident population of over seven thousand was a distant memory. The run-down dining halls were once again in need of replacement, except this time, downsizing was required to better fit a smaller group of three thousand. The old dining halls took up a good deal of space in the central square of campus, which was the heart of Col. Spofford's new building plan. When they came down, it opened up a large area with a bit more breathing room for the buildings to come. The new plan called for a 600-seat dining hall to service two "non-duty" barracks (for men deemed too disabled to perform any on-campus work assignments), a second 1,000-seat dining hall for

the general domiciliary residents, and a central kitchen. Some of the construction and renovation work during this period was accomplished using workers and funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) program—one of President Roosevelt's New Deal agencies tasked with employing millions of people to carry out public works projects and help lift America out of the Depression.



Above: The first draft for the building improvement plan. The plan they implemented differed in layout and number of buildings. The new band shell and the rear addition to Headquarters were never built. Below: Completed construction—A. Dining hall B. Kitchen C&D. Non-duty barracks (domiciliaries). *(Reprinted wtth permission of Dayton Daily News)*

Demolition of 1870s-era barracks

The Buildings That Went Away...and Some That Stayed

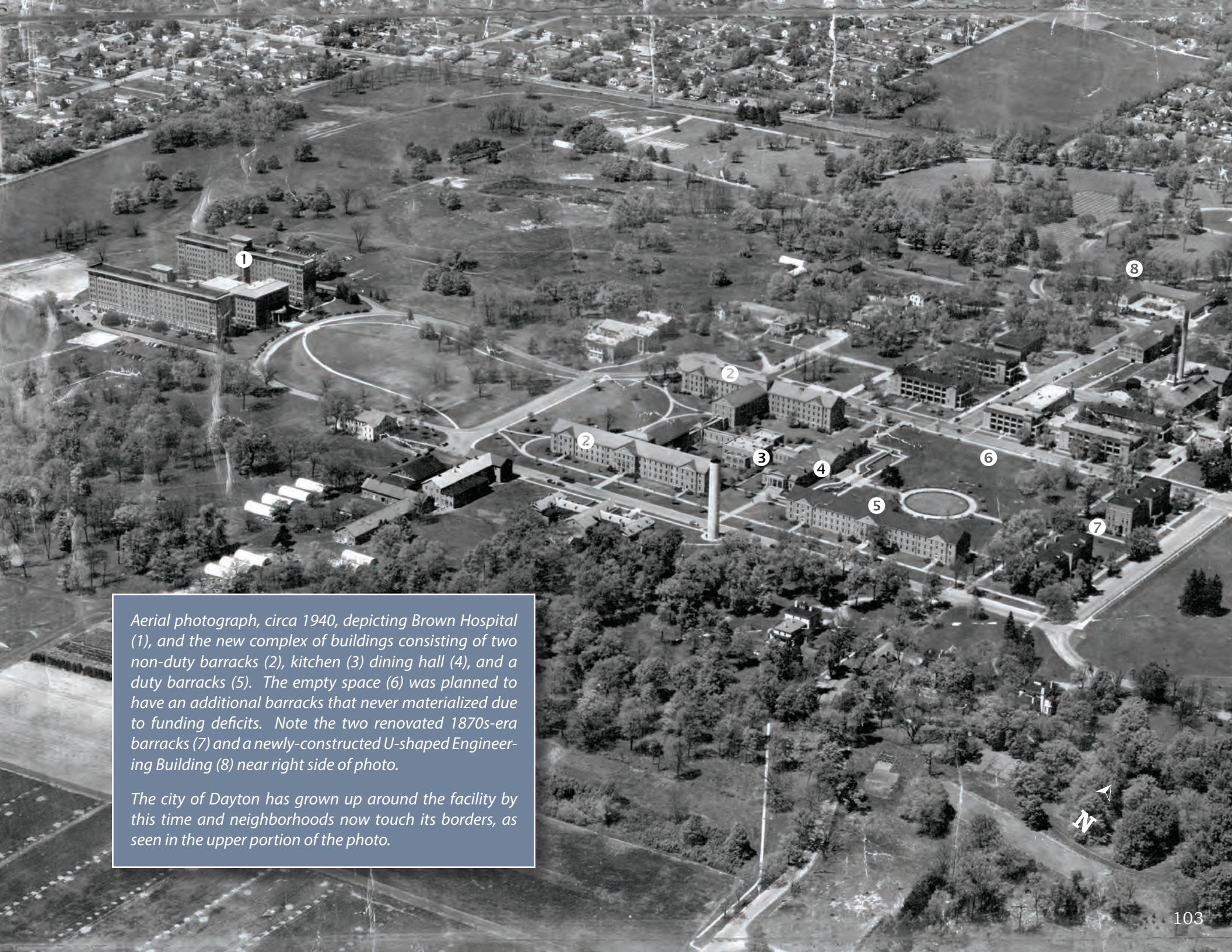
Nine of the buildings removed during the building phase were 19th-century brick barracks. Some civilian residences, the former Beer Hall, the Home Store, the Hotel, and the two previously mentioned Dining Halls all came down during this time. Slated for removal and replacement was the Bandstand on the parade grounds, but it survived because it was part of a later construction phase that did not receive funding. Fortunately, for historical preservation concerns, two barracks escaped demolition: Company One and Company Three. They received extensive upgrades instead, and have remained in use to this day. (images: Reprinted with permission, Dayton Daily News)

"Company Three" barracks was saved

The VA Facility...No Longer a Home in the Country

In the years following the Soldiers Home establishment, the railroad and streetcar lines encouraged the growth of suburban neighborhoods westward from downtown Dayton. The VA—once in the middle of farm country—found itself surrounded by streets, houses, businesses, and many citizens. This change led to unforeseen problems, requiring solutions that fundamentally changed the relationship between the Soldiers Home and the community.

In December of 1939, Col. Spofford announced that the facility would be closed to the general public, for the first time in its existence, except for Sundays and holidays. He also ordered a fence to be constructed around the entire grounds to keep out trespassers, stating that, "The character of the grounds has now so changed, that free access to the grounds is incompatible with its present use: the care of sick and disabled veterans, a considerable number whom are hospital patients." It seems that motor traffic had been using the Home's streets as a thoroughfare, causing safety problems. Unrestricted access to the grounds was resulting in "obstruction to services by beneficiaries" and loss of property. Now, only those with credentials or "an acceptable reason" would be permitted to enter. This closure to the public did not last long. An historical account, published in 1851, states that "in recent years, this policy has also changed. Friends and visitors are once again welcome at the Home." Yet the park-like nature of the place, with its inviting atmosphere for people to visit the grounds, became a vision of the past.



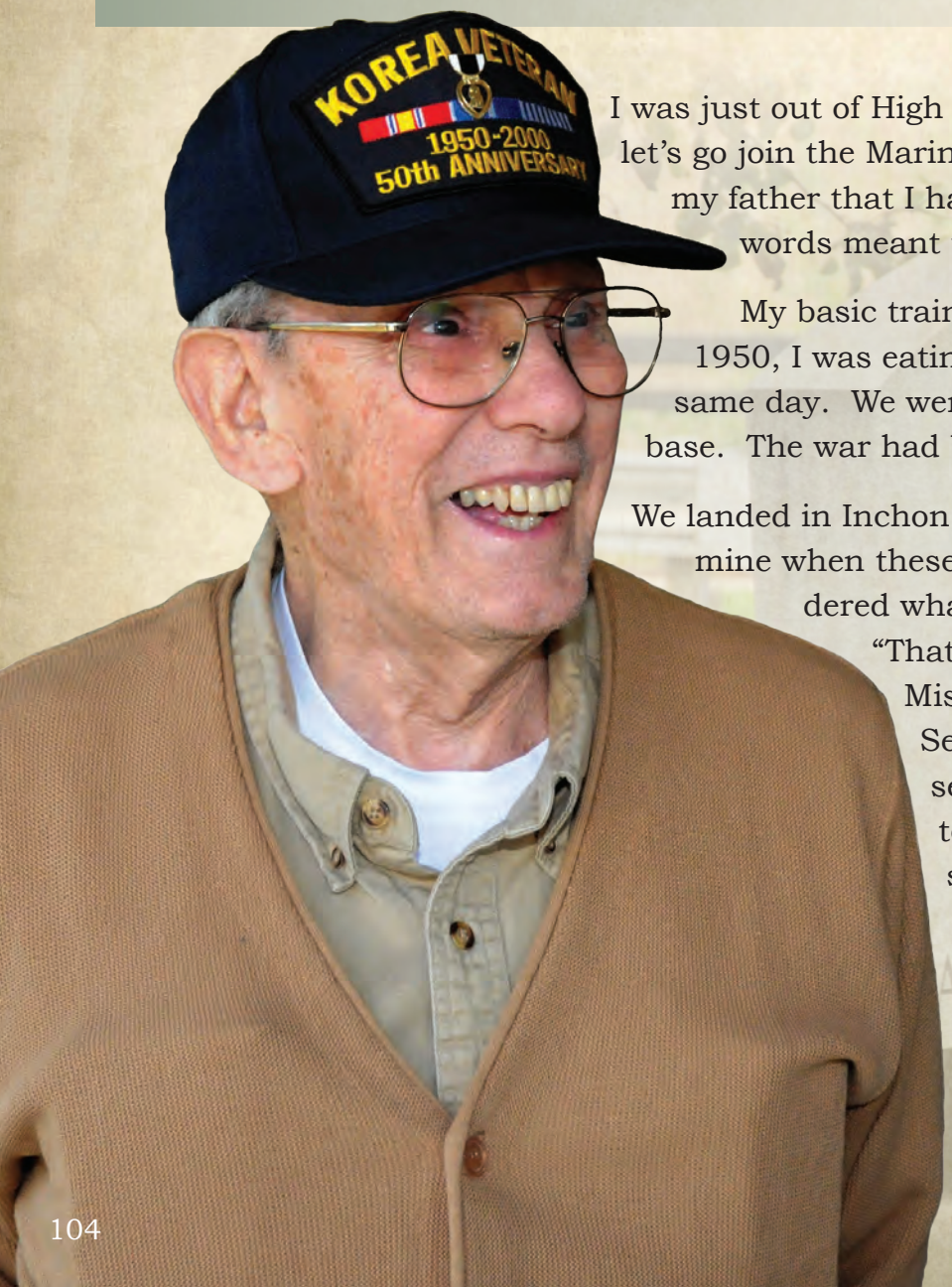
Aerial photograph, circa 1940, depicting Brown Hospital (1), and the new complex of buildings consisting of two non-duty barracks (2), kitchen (3) dining hall (4), and a duty barracks (5). The empty space (6) was planned to have an additional barracks that never materialized due to funding deficits. Note the two renovated 1870s-era barracks (7) and a newly-constructed U-shaped Engineering Building (8) near right side of photo.

The city of Dayton has grown up around the facility by this time and neighborhoods now touch its borders, as seen in the upper portion of the photo.

Our Veterans' Voices

James Snyder

U.S. Marine Corps, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War Veteran, Purple Heart Award



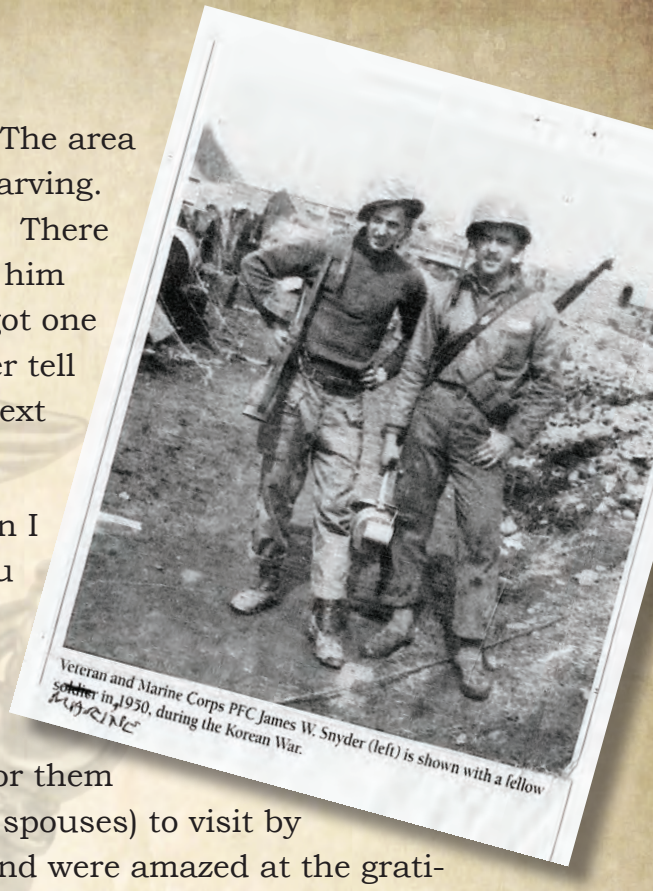
I was just out of High School when one day a buddy of mine said, "Hey, Snyder—let's go join the Marines!" I said, "OK!" and we both went to sign up. When I told my father that I had joined the Marines, he said, "Well, good for you!" Those words meant the world to me; I knew then that I was doing the right thing.

My basic training was Parris Island, South Carolina. On September 15, 1950, I was eating lunch when we were told we had to be off the base that same day. We were given ninety minutes to get our things packed and clear the base. The war had broken out in Korea, and we were heading out to fight.

We landed in Inchon, Korea. The first night, I was on the beach with a buddy of mine when these big, monstrous, red streaks cut through the sky. We wondered what it was when another guy crawled up next to us and said, "That's mighty Moe and she's on our side, boys!" It was the USS Missouri firing sixteen-inch guns. The next day we went into Seoul, Korea. This was a slow and bloody battle which lasted seventeen days in freezing weather. This conflict was referred to as the "Battle of the Chosin Reservoir," an area that has some of the roughest terrain and harshest winters in Korea.

On November 14, 1950, a severe winter storm came over the Reservoir and the temperatures dropped to minus 35-degrees Fahrenheit. This impacted the weapons we used, as they malfunctioned in the severe cold. Many Marines were lost to frostbite and gangrene from the elements. It broke my heart

to help load my brethren's bodies into trucks to move them from the Reservoir. The area around the Reservoir held a sparse number of Korean civilians and they were starving. They would come to camp and beg us for food; we gave them everything we had. There was a small boy who was wearing tattered clothes that were not enough to keep him warm. I asked for an interpreter and found his mother. I went to my tent and got one of the two uniforms I had and gave one to the boy's mother. I had the interpreter tell her to cut it down for him so he would be clothed. I will never forget this—the next morning he was wearing it proudly and came back to show me.


Veteran and Marine Corps PFC James W. Snyder (left) is shown with a fellow soldier in 1950, during the Korean War.

I also served in the Vietnam War and was even activated for Desert Storm. When I was notified for Desert Storm, my wife asked me, "Jim do they know how old you are?" The Desert Storm conflict ended the day before I was to leave.

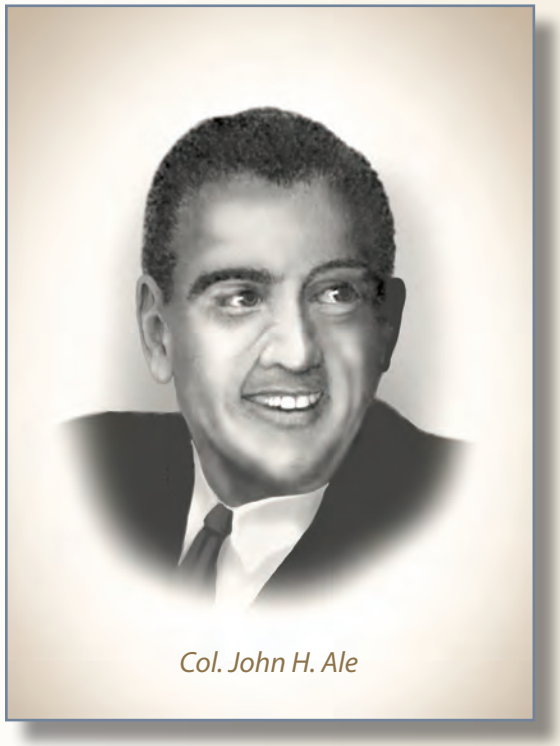
The Korean War, also referred to as the "Forgotten War," probably had the biggest emotional impact for me. Years after the war, the Korean government invited U.S. military who fought there to visit the country and see what we did for them by serving. The "Revisit Korea Program" invites Korean War Veterans (and their spouses) to visit by providing free airfare, accommodations, meals, and tours. My wife and I went and were amazed at the gratitude and respect shown by the Korean people. It was with my first visit back that I began to heal.

My next step in the healing process was to work toward establishing a Korean War Memorial in Ohio. In 1993, I gave numerous presentations to the House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate, which subsequently paid off as contributing factors in the decision to place the "State Korean War Veterans Memorial" and "All Veterans Walkway" in Dayton.

I spent 26 years, 7 months, and 17 days in the Marine Corps and Marine Reserves. I had four years of active duty and twenty-two years in the Reserves. I proudly served my country in more than one war. After serving in combat, I suffered from injuries which were both physical and mental. I am now at peace with my role as a Marine and have such pride in the knowledge that I did the best I could for my country.

Chapter 6: Modernizing VA Medicine

The 1940's Brings a New War and a New Manager



Col. John H. Ale

In his speech at the cornerstone-laying ceremony for the new Administration Building, VA Administrator Hines had spoken of his belief that "a strong national defense was an invitation to keep America out of war." But after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, war could no longer be avoided. The inevitable influx of wounded Veterans into the VA system would begin again, as it had with previous conflicts, and once again, the VA would need to adapt to caring for a new kind of Veteran.

Also unavoidable, because he had reached the mandatory retirement age of 70, was Col. Spofford's departure. Thus, leadership of the facility was passed on to the next Manager in line, and on April 1 of 1941, Colonel John H. Ale transferred from the Indianapolis VA facility and assumed command of the Dayton station. Coincidentally, he was the second commander of the Dayton facility to have lost an arm in battle (recalling here the first Governor, Col. Brown). Col. Ale's injuries came during the first World War at the offensive at Saint Mehiel in France, where his actions earned him the Distinguished Service Cross. With a newly-modernized campus, John Ale steered the Dayton VA Facility through the years of World War II and into the next decade.

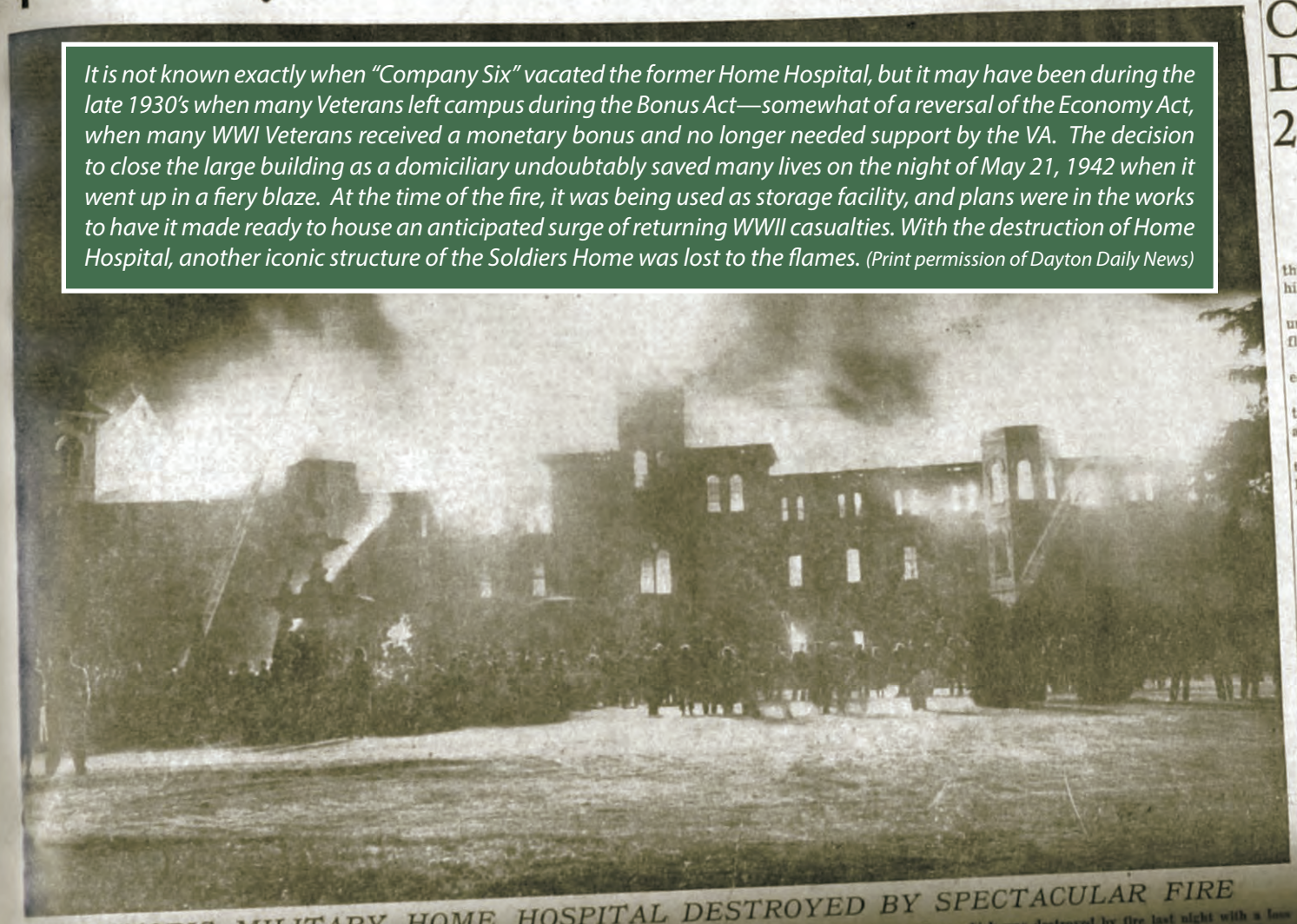
However, after only a year into his tenure at Dayton, he was about to encounter a major conflagration…

DAYTON JOURNAL EXTRA

135th YEAR. No. 121. WEATHER: Rather cool today. Detailed report on page 8. DAYTON, OHIO, THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1942. Entered as Second-Class Matter Post Office at Dayton, Ohio PRICE THREE CENTS

$100,000 Fire Hits Military Home

It is not known exactly when "Company Six" vacated the former Home Hospital, but it may have been during the late 1930's when many Veterans left campus during the Bonus Act—somewhat of a reversal of the Economy Act, when many WWI Veterans received a monetary bonus and no longer needed support by the VA. The decision to close the large building as a domiciliary undoubtably saved many lives on the night of May 21, 1942 when it went up in a fiery blaze. At the time of the fire, it was being used as storage facility, and plans were in the works to have it made ready to house an anticipated surge of returning WWII casualties. With the destruction of Home Hospital, another iconic structure of the Soldiers Home was lost to the flames. (Print permission of Dayton Daily News)



HISTORIC MILITARY HOME HOSPITAL DESTROYED BY SPECTACULAR FIRE

FIREMEN EARLY TODAY still poured water into the smoking, gutted interior of the old Brown hospital at the National Military Home which was destroyed by fire last night with a loss

Old Hospital Destroyed By 2-Alarm Blaze

Structure Unoccupied; Crowds Flock to Scene

A spectacular two-alarm fire destroyed the sprawling three-story Brown hospital atop the National Military home hill last night with $100,000 loss.

The fire, breaking out at 10:25 p. m., was believed under control and fire equipment had started to leave when flames burst anew from the old structure, built in 1868.

The building was unoccupied but had been fully equipped with 458 beds in readiness for any war emergency.

Two firemen, overcome by smoke while inside the structure, were carried to safety. After revival they continued at their stations.

Maj. A. S. Miller, domiciliary officer, said the loss would total "at least $100,000." He added that "it would cost several hundred thousand to replace such a hospital structure."

Thousands View Blaze

Thousands of Daytonians were attracted to the fire, visible for miles because of its high location.

Fire engine company No. 17, in the Home area, responded first to the scene at 10:25 p. m. Other companies followed. The fire in the front part of the building's second floor was thought extinguished.

Guards were posted around the building and Home officials and some fire equipment began leaving the scene. Flames suddenly burst through the building, spreading to the third floor and the roof, according to Major Miller. Firemen were summoned back at 11:25 p. m.

Recently-installed fence and gates around the home grounds kept out the throngs of spectators.

Several hundred persons managed to get past the fence surrounding the home. The glow of the blaze could be seen from many sections of Dayton and was clearly visible from the downtown section.

The building was erected in 1868, as the first permanent hospital structure at the National Military home. It was used as the hospital until more modern hospital facilities were erected on the southern section of the home grounds in 1930.

2-Alarm Fire Is Caused By Resin Blast

President Burned In $10,000 Blaze

An explosion of a kettle of synthetic resin in the Moran Paint company laboratory [illegible]

New Advances in Medical Care of Veterans

General Omar Bradley, VA Administrator
(photo: Library of Congress)

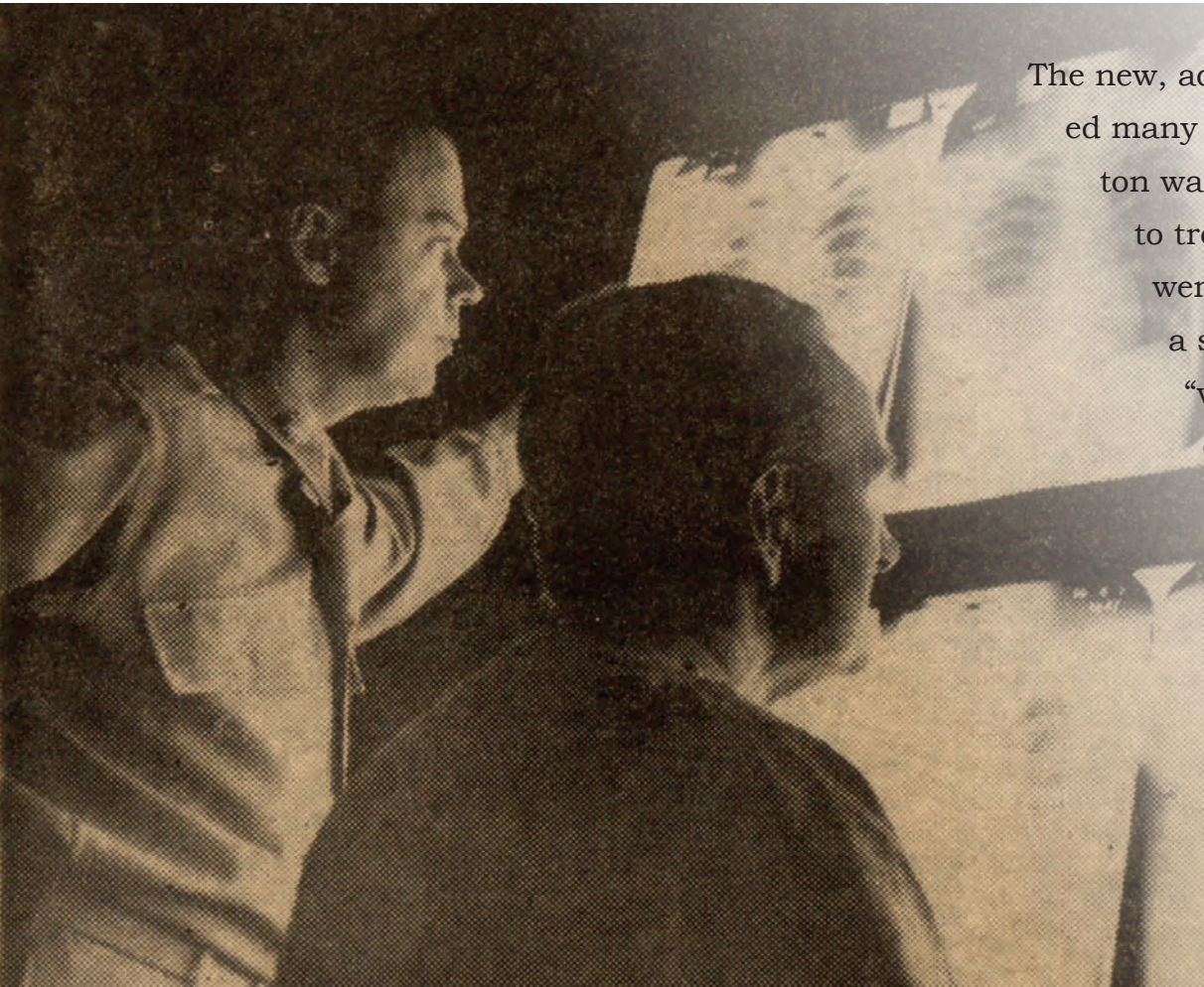
While the VA of the 1930's focused on modernization of the buildings and infrastructure of the campus, the emphasis during WWII and the post-war years was on increasing the number of medical staff employed and the quality of health care they provided. The revolution in Veterans' medical care in the mid-1940's started at the national level, and came about due to the efforts of new VA leadership in Washington, D.C. In many people's view, the quality of medical care that Veterans received at VA hospitals lagged behind the rest of the country. The new leaders in the VA believed they knew the primary causes of this gap and how to remedy the situation.

By 1945, a chronic shortage of skilled physicians existed in the VA system. The newly-appointed VA Administrator, Gen. Omar Bradley and his Chief Medical Director were successful in getting a law passed in Congress that released VA medical staff from Civil Service limitations on pay, promotions, and benefits. They created the Department of Medicine and Surgery in the VA—giving that function new emphasis—and they enacted the Dean's Committee Plan, which for the first time, paired VA facilities with medical schools to create teaching hospitals around the country. Now, the VA was poised to attract the top-level talent needed to bring it in line with the standard of care that VA leadership, and the American people, expected for their Veterans.

Locally, these changes were reflected by Dayton VA's new affiliation with the University of Cincinnati's College of Medicine, which lasted five years, followed by an affiliation with the Ohio State University College of Medicine. These partnerships gave VA patients access to specialists in medical fields such as general surgery, urology, radiology, internal medicine and dentistry. It also provided residency training programs for the next generation of physicians and created a new source of future VA doctors.

Upgraded Equipment and Increased Staffing

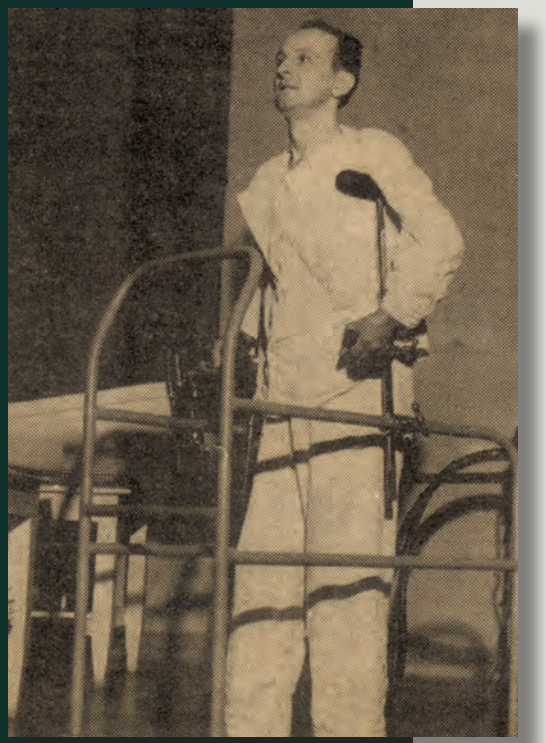
In 1945, thirty percent of the patients coming into the Dayton VA were Veterans from WWII. The hospital's Chief Medical Director explained the challenge this created: "Veterans of this war bring in new diseases and new problems. In all cases, the latest and most advanced ideas are planned in both the diagnosis and treatment. The large staff assures Veterans of prompt examination." The Dayton facility at that time was the second largest in the nation, and they had increased their normal staff of 46 doctors to 61, including five dentists. (Of note, the first female doctor on staff at Dayton was in charge of the "chronic neurological ward"). The hospitals had 1,050 beds, 200 of which were in the tubercular facility, and they saw over 6,500 patients in a typical year.



The new, advanced equipment procured at this time included many items for the physical therapy department. Dayton was one of four facilities in the country designated to treat paraplegia cases (from spinal fractures) that were common in the second World War. They had a sub-aqua therapy tank, low voltage machines, a "walker" apparatus, and exercise equipment, as examples.

The radiology department was well-equipped with modern x-ray machines and was kept busy examining up to 3,000 diagnostic films per month. A large percentage of these were used to determine the degree of disability for discharged war Veterans.

(photo: Reprinted with permission of Dayton Daily News)



Pathology Service laboratory (above) and a Physical Therapy "walker" apparatus (below).

Brown Hospital's pathology lab was a key component of patient care; up to 15,000 tests per month were performed by the laboratory assistants, who were long-time employees and mostly women. The Psychiatric Service was established at this time, and was described as "meeting the needs of patients with group therapy, chemo-therapy, electroshock, biofeedback, family counseling, psychological testing, social services and pastoral services." Historical records of Pharmacy Service indicate there were three units—for the domiciliary, the TB hospital and Brown Hospital—organized under one Chief.

A New Name (Again) and A New Dress Code

In 1946, the term "Facility" was deemed outdated, and the name of the Dayton VA campus was changed to "Dayton VA Center," or "Dayton VAC," for short. Along with this came a relaxing of the formal dress code; officers who worked at the station had always worn military-style uniforms while on duty, but the new policy allowed for casual dress instead. This would be one of the first outward signs of a shift away from military-style rules that had governed the campus for almost eighty years.

Programs to Improve Quality of Life

New programs came into the VA at this time, and notable among these was Special Services. This program was established in 1946 as a separate division in the VA and was comprised of five sections: Recreation and Entertainment, Physical Department (Sports), Library Service, Canteen and Chaplain Service. While these individual functions existed prior to Special Services, the new organization brought them under one unifying program. The Service's primary mission was

to enhance the basic physical needs of the patients, giving them a more fulfilling and happy life at the Center. Special Services also coordinated the many voluntary activities of outside organizations that wished to contribute their time and talents to help the Veterans live meaningful lives. As a single program, Special Services was eventually abolished in 1961, but the component sections remained and flourished. Voluntary Services grew from the initial program, as did Social Work and Recreation Therapy.

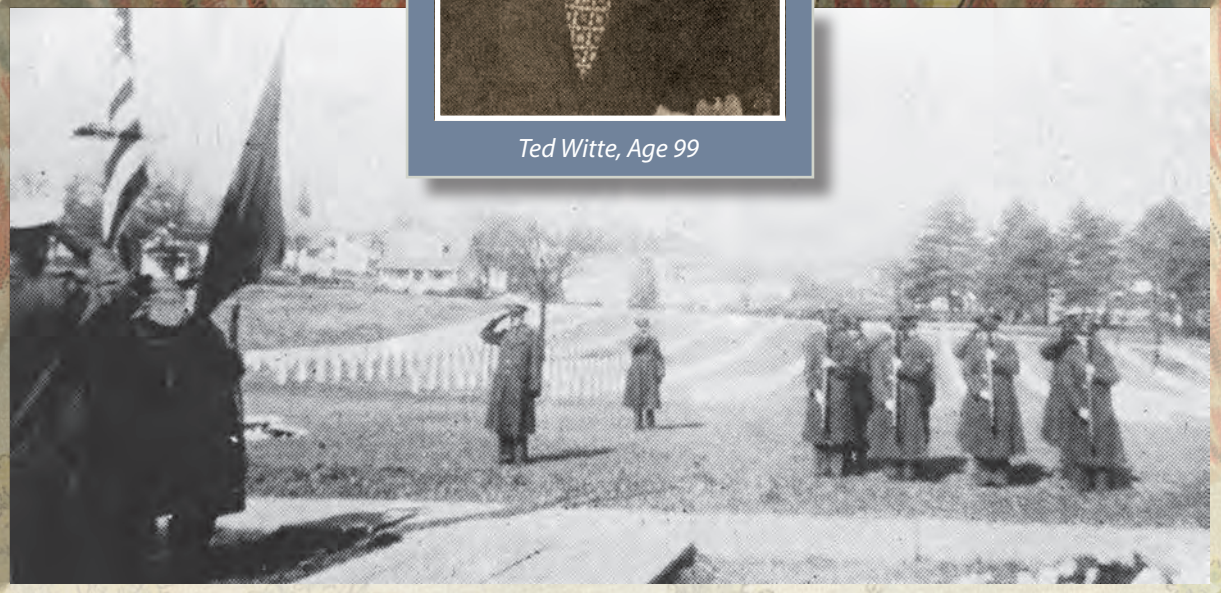
Special Services organized wheelchair bowling for the paraplegic patients in the late 1940's.

Another important program started at the VA Center in 1946 was Physical Medicine and Rehabiliation. Although Occupational Therapy had been in place at the VA for decades, the new "PM&R" Service brought updated methods of restoring mobility or improving functionality to injured servicemen, including the most technologically advanced prostheses.

Along with PM&R's aim to rehab the physical body, Vocational Rehabilitation & Education was implemented to provide guidance for returning WWII Veterans and help place them into suitable employment, much the same as was done for their WWI brethren decades earlier.

Left: a Veteran double amputee dives into the pool at the YMCA. He was a patient in the Corrective Therapy program, part of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service.
(photos on these pages: reprinted with permission of Dayton Daily News)

Ted Witte, Age 99



Burial of the last Civil War Veteran Member of the Home

Theodore Witte

February 13, 1947

photos: reprinted with permission from Dayton Daily News

Further De-militarization Under Manager Phillips

After a tenure of eleven years, Col. John Ale left the Dayton VA Center, and following him was a succession of managers with relatively short terms who oversaw the Center through the 1950's and the Korean War. The first was Bert C. Moore (1952-1954), followed by Col. John I. Spreckelmyer (1954-1955), and finally John C. Phillips (1955-1958). Under Manager Phillips' leadership, several notable changes came to the Center concerning the atmosphere and rules of the domiciliary.

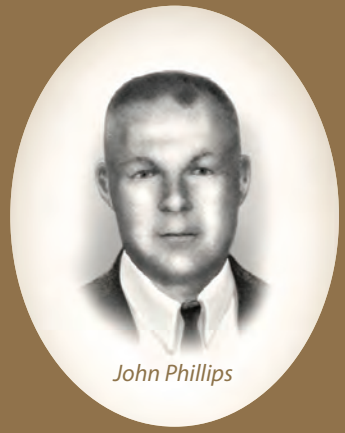

Bert C. Moore

Whereas Col. Ale began the process of moving away from military regimen by eliminating staff military uniforms, Manager Phillips took this concept to the next level by permitting civilian clothing to be worn by the "dom" (domiciliary) members instead of issued uniforms, painting over the "institutional grey" of the interior walls with cheerful, bright colors, and replacing military terminology with everyday language. Also, the practice of assigning work duty to the dom members was changed, which greatly improved morale. To that point, work assignments were much like military detail—barracks duty that was boring and lacked incentive. The new philosophy was dubbed "constructive employment", and through Special Services projects, most of the dom members were matched with paid work assignments around campus that captured their interest and gave them a real sense of contributing to their own care, and to their fellow Veterans.


John Spreckelmyer

Improvements in the 1950's...and Another Fire

The 1950's brought new emphasis in the concept of hospital cleanliness, resulting in the formation of a Housekeeping division at the Dayton VAC in 1954. Nationally, VA hospitals struggled with cross-contamination issues, and after a study initiated by VA's Central Office, the infection rate was found, not surprisingly, to parallel the level of cleanli-

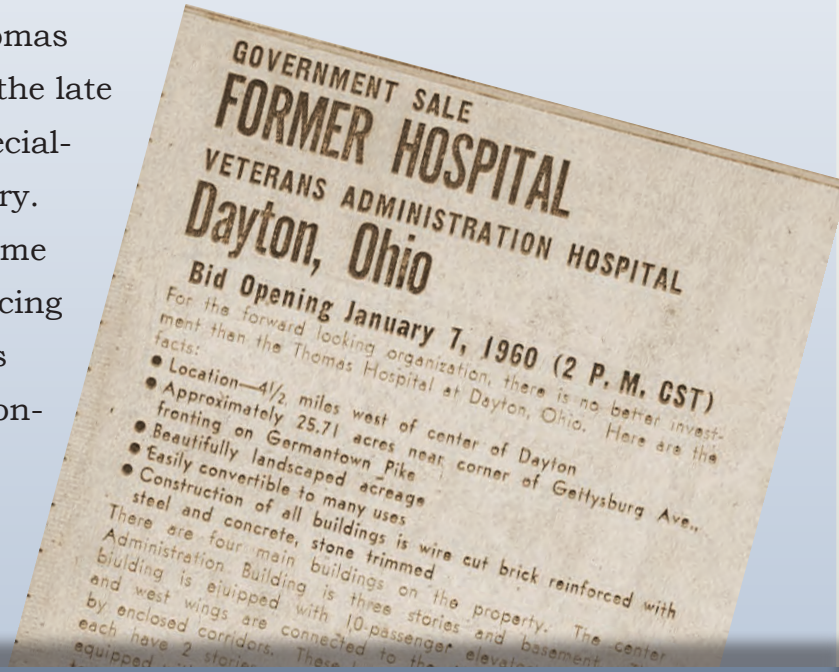

John Phillips

ness in the hospitals. Establishment of Housekeeping as a separate and complete Service improved the sanitary environment throughout the Center and helped reduce the hospital-acquired infection rate.

The year 1957 saw the creation of a formal Research program at the Center; until that point, research activities consisted of occasional case reports and investigative papers. The focus of the new program was in clinical medicine, and several new laboratories were established and made available to the patient care aspect of the Center. The result was a great increase in the number of research studies, whose results were published in many of the leading scientific journals and presented at national and international scientific meetings.

A signifcant event of this time period was the closing and sale of the Thomas Tubercular Hospital. With the advent of tuberculosis drug therapies in the late 1940's and early 50's, the deadly disease was finally conquered, and specialized hospitals and sanitoriums in the VA system were no longer necessary. Veterans diagnosed with TB could be treated effectively and returned home more quickly, reducing the number of beds reserved for long-convalescing patients.

Now that TB had become a much



GOVERNMENT SALE

FORMER HOSPITAL

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL

Dayton, Ohio

Bid Opening January 7, 1960 (2 P. M. CST)

For the forward looking organization, there is no better investment than the Thomas Hospital at Dayton, Ohio. Here are the facts:

- Location—4½ miles west of center of Dayton
- Approximately 25.71 acres near corner of Gettysburg Ave., fronting on Germantown Pike
- Beautifully landscaped acreage
- Easily convertible to many uses
- Construction of all buildings is wire cut brick reinforced with steel and concrete, stone trimmed

There are four main buildings on the property. The center Administration Building is three stories and basement building is equipped with 10-passenger elevator and west wings are connected to the by enclosed corridors. These each have 2 stories equipped

Left: A lightning strike sparks a fire at the laundry facility on June 20, 1955. Although no one was injured, a large portion of the roof was destroyed and the 1800's-era building was, to quote an employee, "held together with wire" until a new laundry building was constructed in 1957. Above: An auction notice announcing the sale of the Thomas Tubercular Hospital. (photo: reprinted with permission of Dayton Daily News)

more manageable illness, VA Research turned its attention to another lung disease ravaging the Veteran population: cancer. During WWII, many soldiers were given cigarettes in their field rations, with never a thought to the possible health consequences of tobacco use. After the war and through the 1950's, VA doctors were at the forefront of research in the link between cancer and smoking. At this time, the Dayton VAC became one of six VA hospitals in the country to participate in national lung cancer study, with the hopes of finding an early detection method for the increasingly common and fatal disease.

An important project closing out the decade was the construction of the Recreation Building. Originally, Col. Spofford had hoped to replace the aging Memorial Hall with a new recreation/theater building, and a news article from 1941 anticipated the grand hall's demolition in order to make way for it. However when funds did not materialize for the new construction, Memorial Hall gained a reprieve. It continued to be used until 1955, when deterioration and safety concerns caused its closure, and it was demolished the next year. Funding finally came through, and on June 21, 1959, the $1.5 million Recreation Building was dedicated, featuring a 710-seat theater with a raised viewing area for wheelchair users, an eight-lane bowling alley, rooms for billiards and crafts, and a large multipurpose room.

The new Recreation Building, 1960's

The Vietnam Era To 1980

The 1960's and early 70's saw America embroiled in a war in southeast Asia, encompassing the countries of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Just as with previous wars, the Vietnam Veterans returned with issues unique to the conflict in which they fought. Although some Veterans of every era suffered negative psychological effects of serving in combat, it was a research study including Vietnam Veterans struggling with mental health issues that led to the formally-recognized diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and eventually to effective treatment methods.

Ray Bumgarner became the Director of the Center in December of 1959 and guided the facility through the next decade, until his retirement in 1971.

New boiler plant under construction, 1961.

The controversial nature of the war and the negative attitudes displayed by many in society towards these returning Veterans added to their difficulty in readjusting to civilian life. Additionally, many suffered from the detrimental effects of exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange, an exfoliant used extensively by the U.S.military, especially during the war. However, because VA did not acknowledge Agent Orange as the causal agent in some Veterans' (and their families') post-war illnesses, many were denied benefits and treatment in VA hospitals. Not until 1991, were servicemembers from contaminated zones presumed to have been exposed, helping to clear the way for establishing service-connection to a long list of diseases known to be caused by exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. The lists of acknowledged exposure zones and exposure-related diseases remain a controversial subject to this day.

A New Nursing Home is Opened

In 1962, Congress passed a law that authorized 4,000 nursing home care beds throughout the Veterans Administration. This gave Veterans living in the community the option of long-term nursing care that had previously only existed for residents already in the domiciliary. One of the first VA nursing homes was opened at Dayton, when a non-duty barracks was converted to a Nursing Home Care Unit. Also that year, the Center activated a program called the Restoration Care Unit, which was in essence, a continuation of the early Soldiers Home practice of providing workshops in order to teach Veterans a trade and assist them in gaining outside employment. Approximately 140 Veterans were assigned to this unit in the 1960's.

A blind Veteran demonstrates the employment potential of participants in the Restoration Care Unit at the Dayton VAC.

The Veterans Handicraft Store

The workshops and rehabilitation programs initiated during this time meant Veterans were once again producing items of a useful nature. This led to the opening of the Veterans Handicraft Store, which promoted the sale of items fabricated by the domiciliary residents, bringing to mind the days when the Civil War Veterans sat along the walkways of the Home, selling their crafts to the many tourists in order to earn a little spending money.

The Veterans Handicraft Store, 1960's. A volunteer shows customers Veteran-made rugs, woven on looms in the Center's workshops. (photos: Reprinted with permission of Dayton Daily News)

The first grave markers were made of wood and were replaced with marble in 1882. Cornelius Solly was the first interment in the Home cemetery on September 11, 1867—only 9 days after the first Veterans arrived.

Every Memorial Day, the graves are decorated by the local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops in the Dayton area.

Administration of the Cemetery is Transferred

Since its inception, the Dayton Soldiers Home maintained a cemetery that served as the final resting place for Veterans who passed away while living there. For most of its history, care of the cemetery and all funeral proceedings were handled by the residents and officers of the Home. In 1973, administration of Veterans' cemeteries was consolidated into a new branch of the VA, called the National Cemetery System. (This would later be changed to its current name, National Cemetery Administration, in 1998.) As of 2017, this branch of the VA oversees 135 national cemeteries. The Army still maintains two locations, Arlington and the Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C., and the Department of the Interior maintains fourteen sites located in national parks such as Gettysburg.

Burial in a national cemetery is available to members of the armed forces who have met a minimum of active duty service and those discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Eligible spouses and children may also be buried, as well as members of the reserve forces who die while on active duty or during training.

(photo: Tessa Kalman

Creation of a New Medical School Affiliation

The most impactful change at the Center since the construction of Brown Hospital happened in 1974, when Wright State University was awarded a $19.1 million, seven-year grant from the Veterans Administration to establish a medical school at the Dayton VA Center. This enabled the construction of two buildings dedicated to the new School of Medicine beginning in 1977: a Health Sciences building featuring laboratories, classrooms, and a state-of-the-art library; and four years later, a Basic Sciences building that housed offices, more classrooms and laboratories and an amphitheater-style lecture hall.

Above: interior of the medical library located in the Health Sciences Building, as it appeared through the 1990's.

Right: dedication of the $3.1 million Basic Sciences Building, completed in 1981 and built just northwest of Brown Hospital. Today, it is the location of the facility's medical simulation center—the medical school has been relocated to WSU's main campus.

The new affiliation with Wright State provided sponsorships for forty resident physicians in the areas of dermatology, general surgery, internal medicine and psychiatry. Before the affiliation, less then forty percent of VA physicians were board-certified. Within ten years, seventy percent were certified, and the Dayton VAC enjoyed the opportunity to recruit doctors who not only had patient care experience, but strong teaching and research interests as well. With this new partnership, the affiliation with the Ohio State University College of Medicine was phased out, with the exception of OSU's Colleges of Dentistry and Optometry, which have continued to this day.

Upgrades and Additions to an Aging Hospital

Willard G. Hitchings

The Director of the Dayton VA Center through the 1970's was Willard G. Hitchings, who served a lengthy term from 1971 to 1984. During his tenure, a VA Central Office report from the mid-70's found the 45-year-old Brown Hospital to be "totally inadequate, not only from a space standpoint, but also functionally and from a safety viewpoint." It also pointed out that salaries for VA physicians had not kept pace with those on the outside, making recruitment and retention of quality medical staff a problem. The Center was also suffering from an ongoing nursing shortage. Because nurses' salaries were considered competitive with other local hospitals, Director Hitchings theorized this was primarily because newly-graduated nurses were reluctant to work in west Dayton, as the neighborhood surrounding the campus had become a poverty-stricken and crime-laden area.

Some of these issues would be helped by the new medical school affiliation and facilities to come, including the construction of a $11.5 million Clinical Addition. The new three-story building would house the outpatient care areas on the first floor, laboratories on the second and a new operating room suite and patient recovery rooms on the third. Built during the 1979 national energy crisis, this structure featured over half a million dollars in energy-conservation measures, including solar panels to furnish hot water. Concurrent to this construction was a $10 million renovation to Brown Hospital. This allowed the conversion of the eight-bed open wards to private and semi-private patient rooms. This upgrade was the Veterans Administration's answer to the Center's request for a new hospital.

1970's nursing staff pose at the front entrance of Brown Hospital

Two celebrities of the day came to visit the Veterans and staff of the Dayton VA Center. Country singer Barbara Mandrell performed in the theater in 1971 (left), and comedian Marty Allen stopped by to greet the ladies of Miller Cottage in 1975 (right).

A New Domiciliary for the Resident Veterans...and Yet Another Name Change

Since the 1940's, the focus of the VA had been on upgrading and maintaining the medical facilities at the Center. Meanwhile, the Depression-era barracks housing the resident Veterans languished behind, and were now, forty years later, woefully outdated. When they were built they were considered quite modern, however, most Veterans lived in open barracks with little privacy or personal space. This would be remedied in 1980 when construction began on a new domiciliary located on the large open space of the former parade grounds near the historic band-stand gazebo. It was a complex of five buildings, with four "dom" units surrounding a central recreation and din-ing facility. Each unit featured semi-private rooms arranged around a central courtyard.

The same year, in order to reflect the VA's emphasis on providing modern medical care for Veterans—and to further shed its image as an "old soldiers' home"—the place was once again renamed. It would now be called the Dayton VA *Medical* Center (VAMC).

Plans for a New Hospital

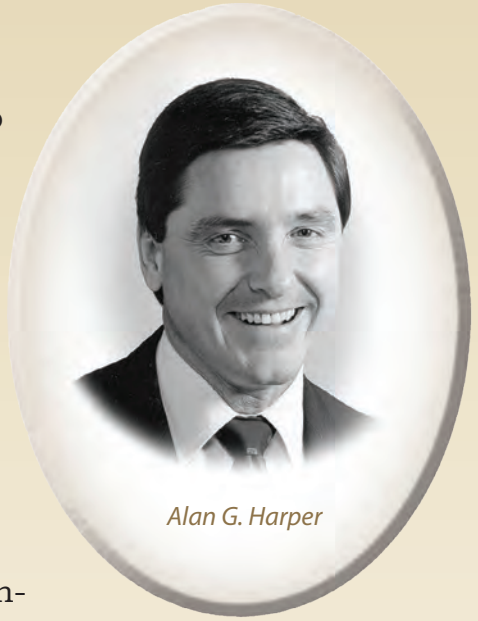
Certainly, the additions and renovations to Brown Hospital helped to alleviate some of the deficiencies found in the Central Office report. However, there was just so much that could be done with the now fifty-year-old building and its aging infrastructure and outdated floorplan. Since its construction, the demographics of the Veteran population using VA care had changed greatly. While the Center had once been primarily a residential care facility with a modest hospital to treat a multitude of domiciliary patients, that population had now dwindled to hundreds. The facility now needed to become a high-level medical center able to treat thousands of patients coming in from the community. Officials at the Dayton VAMC did not give up on their quest for a new, modern hospital building to meet this need. They made their case to VA Central Office for funding, and by 1982 were approved $150 million for hospital replacement and modernization.

However, an unexpected delay occurred when a newly-appointed VA Administrator, Robert Nimmo, froze all construction projects slated to begin after 1983. His stated reasoning was that many VA building projects were politically motivated, and therefore all projects would be re-examined and justified under "new and defensible criteria." Some VA sites had their projects cancelled under this review, but fortunately for Dayton, this was not the case. In 1984, Director Hitchings publically announced the architectural concept planned for Brown Hospital's replacement, and at the same time made known his planned retirement for that same year.

Artist's rendering of the replacement to Brown Hospital, consisting of a ten-story, 476-bed tower.

Aerial view circa 1981. Notable features: 1. new Domiciliary complex, built on the old parade grounds. 2. Administration building— the parking lot behind it is where Memorial Hall once stood. 3. the boiler plant built in 1961. 4. Supply Warehouse built in 1933 to replace the Commissary. 5. Laundry, built in 1957 after the original one burned. 6. Clinical Addition, with the WSU Basic Sciences building behind it. 7. Recreation Building and theater.

Modern Progress Versus Historical Preservation


Alan G. Harper

The next Director in succession to lead the Dayton VAMC was Alan G. Harper, who began his VA career as a pharmacy resident in 1969. As he was assigned progressively higher positions, he worked at eight previous VA facilities before coming to Dayton, although, this was his first directorship. Improving patient care, staff morale, and community involvement were his stated top priorities when he took office on Aug. 1, 1991. Mr. Harper was described as being personable and outgoing, and was popular with both the Veterans and staff at the Medical Center.

At the time of his arrival in 1984, discussions among community leaders, highway transportation officials, and state preservationists about a proposed highway expansion had begun to heat up. The proposal had a new extension of U.S. Route 35 cutting through the southeast corner of the Dayton VAMC property. This plan would substantially alter the man-made lakes in that area as well as the historic Anderson Gate entrance. Because there were no buildings located in that area of campus, the sentiment by the highway officials was that this encroachment would have little impact on the historically significant aspect of the facility. Preservationists argued that their reasoning was flawed, and that the grounds and lakes, as an inherent component of the early Soldiers Home layout, were equally historic and deserving of preservation. They also made the case that a busy, elevated highway running through a portion of campus was incongruous with the historic nature of the place and would damage its integrity.

Much debate ensued, and in the end, a small modification to the placement of the extension was made, and although the highway did cut through the corner of campus and significantly altered the shape of the lower lakes, it encroached on the property to a lesser degree than originally planned. Despite the disagreement over the road's course near the VA, leadership was supportive of the overall extension project, as it made for easier and quicker access to the facility as a whole, and especially to the part of campus where patient care areas were located.

A New Hospital is Realized

Throughout the mid-1980's, Mr. Harper championed the cause to bring a new modern medical facility to the Dayton VAMC. The request for a new hospital had lanquished in Congress for a number of years, but with the new Director's impetus, the difficult process of steering the $82.5 million construction project through political channels and logistical challenges was successfully accomplished. On November 3, 1988, Mr. Harper, along with local dignitaries and staff, celebrated with a groundbreaking ceremony for the new building. However, before he would enjoy seeing the completion of the the new hospital, Mr. Harper transferred to the larger Dallas VA Medical Center where he had been appointed as the new Director.

Director Alan Harper (left) stops for a photo while touring the partially-completed new hospital.

Our Veterans' Voices

Jackie Tyler

U.S. Army, Former Commander Regional Correctional Facility at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

I graduated from Cheboygan High School in 1972. Inspired by our older brother, a Marine who was killed in Vietnam, my sister, younger brother and I all enlisted in the military. She joined the Marines; he and I went into the Army. I joined in 1977 just as the Vietnam War was ending.

I went into the Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC), and once I graduated, I was stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky. We had an officer group that was very connected; both the officers and the enlisted supported each other. Next, I went to Fort Ord at Monterey Bay, California—a great place to enjoy the large open spaces and the unique oak forests. It was one of the largest military bases on the west coast. From there I went to Giessen, Germany, home of the 3rd Armored Division's 1st Brigade and the 284th Base Support Battalion. Reassignments took me to Norfolk, Virginia, then to Washington D.C. and back to Norfolk again. I was in Cuba for a little while and it was beautiful, although we were only allowed to go to approved places off-base.

I went into the service as a Military Police Officer and ended up finding a career overseeing personnel. I identified the specific needs for each outfit and filled the openings with the best personnel to ensure we had all areas covered. I had the esteemed opportunity of being the first female Commander of the Regional Correctional Facility at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. It marked the summit of my military career and was a milestone for females in the Army. I challenged myself and took a tough job that developed me into a great leader. The facility housed both males and females, and I learned how to work under pressure and use problem-solving skills while executing the mission within the Corrections Division. I developed a prisoner work program to shift the attitude away from being

purely punitive and more towards having a positive outcome for the prisoners. My idea was to build on the discipline they learned in the military and give them a sense of pride by using meaningful job assignments. I eventually ended up writing policies and regulations for Military Correctional Facilities and followed up with field inspections to substantiate conformity.

I was always very active in physical sports and ran numerous marathons. I retired with 20 years of active duty service, but after retirement, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and sought care from the VA Medical Center. They conducted intensive testing to see how best to treat me and discovered I had shown signs and symptoms while I was in the military. Initially, I had a sense of great loss when I was diagnosed. However, the Veteran employees and Veteran patients at the VA give me a sense of camaraderie, and I feel at home when I'm at the medical center. The Dayton VA Medical Center's Spinal Cord Injury Clinic works to treat the symptoms of MS but also helps us maintain our independence.

The Wheel Chair Games are a passion of mine. They are a rehabilitation and wheelchair sports program that encourages Veterans with MS, amputations, neurological issues, and spinal cord injuries to feel empowered to live healthy and active lives. I enjoy the social networking and love the fitness aspect of the program. I have regularly competed in the discus, javelin, shot put, hand cycling, and weightlifting divisions, and even have a few medals to show for it.

The Dayton VA Medical Center has shown dedication to providing effective treatments for MS symptom management and empathizes with the impact the disease has on Veterans and their families. The health care services at the VA are the best in the nation!

Chapter 7: The Department of Veterans Affairs

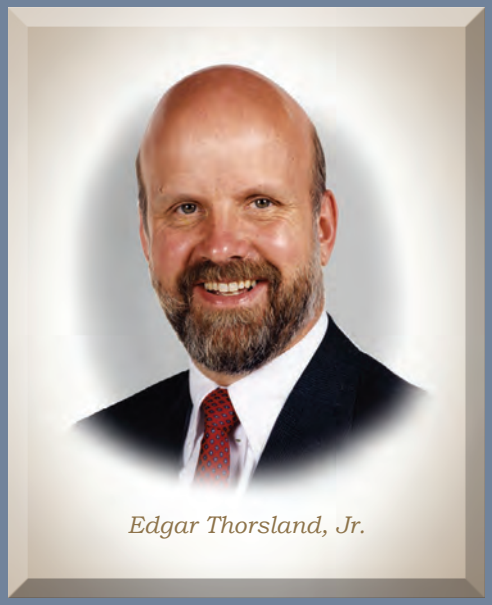
The completed Patient Tower and Brown Hospital stood together until Brown's demolition in 1993.
(photo: Ray Kummer)

The new hospital reflects sunbeams on a foggy morning.
(photo: Tessa Kalman)

The new Patient Tower arose during a transition in the national VA system, much like its predecessor Brown Hospital did in 1930. On March 15, 1989, President Ronald Reagan officially promoted the Veterans Administration from an independent government agency to the Cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs. Soon after, the component of VA that oversaw the hospital and domiciliary systems—the Department of Medicine and Surgery—was renamed the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The other two components of VA were called the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Above: President Ronald Reagan signs legistation that elevates the Veterans Administration to the Cabinet-level Department of Veterans Affairs. With this action, the VA becomes the second largest Department in the Cabinet (in terms of budget), after the Department of Defense. (photo: VA)

The year 1992 was an important milestone for the Dayton VA Medical Center. The staff had welcomed new Director Edgar Thorsland just a few months prior, the 125th anniversary of the campus was celebrated, and the Patient Tower hospital was opened to Veterans in the spring of that year. Later that summer, the Dayton VAMC was honored to host the 12th National Wheelchair Games, bringing disabled Veterans from across the country to the Dayton VAMC campus to compete in various athletic events.



Edgar Thorsland, Jr.

A New Hospital and a New Management Initiative

The Patient Tower

When Edgar Thorsland, Jr. was appointed as Director of the Dayton VA Medical Center in 1991, the first major event to occur under his leadership was the dedication of the new Patient Tower hospital building on November 1, 1991.

Total Quality Improvement

During Director Thorsland's tenure, the VA underwent a new initiative called Total Quality Improvement (TQI). Its goal was to improve the timeliness and quality of services to Veterans at the Medical Center. These concepts implemented in the government were known in outside sectors as Total Quality Management, a philosophy common throughout American organizations and corporations in the 1980's and 90's, mainly as a way to compete with Japanese industry.

Steven M. Cohen

Examples of VA Community Clinics: Middletown, Ohio (top) and Richmond, Indiana (bottom) (photo: Ray Kummer)

VA Care Expands Into Local Communities

Mr. Thorsland's directorship in Dayton lasted until 1996, when he was appointed to lead the VA Medical Center in Denver, Colorado. As a result, for only the second time in the history of the Center, a current staff member would take over the helm as Director. Just as former Home Treasurer Jerome B. Thomas was elevated to lead the Home into the nineteenth century as Governor, so would Chief of Staff Steven M. Cohen be promoted to lead the VAMC into the twenty-first. Dr. Cohen's term lasted eight years, and he oversaw the expansion of services beyond the main campus in Dayton, bringing VA health care to Veterans in their own communities.

Community Based Outpatient Clinics were the VA's solution to making health care more accessible to Veterans that lived in remote cities located in a Medical Center's region. In the days when the Dayton Soldiers Home was the Central Branch of the national Homes, Veterans came from all over the mid-West to live and receive care. As the Home system transformed into Veterans Administration, many VA facilities were built nationwide to better service the Veteran populations that lived in larger cities. Over the decades, Dayton VAMC's region was reduced to mainly the counties located in western and southwestern Ohio. By 1998, the need for more convenient primary care sites across this region resulted in four VA outpatient clinics opening over the course of the next five years in Springfield, Middletown, and Lima, Ohio and one in Richmond, Indiana.

A Nursing Home Becomes a Community

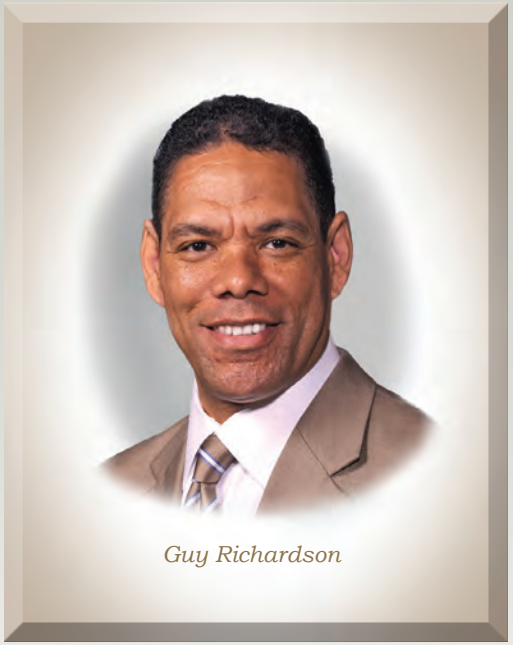
While nursing home care had long been offered at the Dayton campus, a new Nursing Home Care Unit was unveiled in 1999. The domiciliary complex built in 1980 was revamped and made suitable for geriatric patients needing continous nursing care. The dom patients, their numbers ever decreasing, traded places and moved into the former nursing home building.

Nursing home care in the VA during this time period reflected a management philosophy common in elder care facilities throughout the U.S. While the staff was compassionate and devoted to their patients, the surroundings were somewhat spartan and institutional in nature. In the interests of efficiency, often patients were expected to conform to rules and schedules patterned after the "medical model", much like a hospital ward. This type of management tended to benefit the convenience of staff and the facility, rather than the patients. A few years later, this would change when VA nursing home care underwent "Cultural Transformation" and the complex was remodeled further to reflect a more home-like atmosphere. More importantly, the underlying philosophy changed; now the rules, schedules and activities were centered around what was preferred by the Veterans, and they were given more choices about their care. Their individual units were now called "neighborhoods", and the term "nursing home" was changed to Community Living Center (CLC). The CLC patients were now considered residents, and the staff were encouraged to become like family members to the seniors in their care.


Updated dining area


Renovated courtyard

Left: CLC resident Bolivar Baker celebrates his 100th birthday. (photos: Ray Kummer)



Guy Richardson

An Appreciation for Historic Preservation

Even as the Dayton VAMC adapted to meet the needs of Veterans and embrace new technologies, leadership recognized the need to retain the historic nature of the campus. The American Veterans Heritage Center (AVHC), a non-profit organization dedicated to the campus' preservation, led the initiative to have it placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004. Soon after, they secured grant funding that allowed for the renovation of the Protestant Chapel, which over the years had become deterioriated and subsequently closed to the public. Thanks to their efforts, the Chapel was fully updated and is in use once again as a place of worship.

In 2004, Dr. Cohen stepped down as Director to resume his duties as Chief of Staff, and new leadership came to the Medical Center. Guy Richardson transferred from Maryland to Dayton and starting in 2005, he led the facility for the next six years. He recognized the challenge of retaining historic structures on the property, even as shifting priorities and realignment of services caused some to fall into disuse. He was a proponent of a federal option called "Enhanced Use Leases" for renting out the vacant buildings on the grounds. Rather than spend tax

The American Veterans Heritage Center, a non-profit organization located on the grounds of the Dayton VA Medical Center, opened in 2000 with the mission to "preserve the assets and history of the Dayton VA Campus and make it the national archetype for honoring and supporting America's Veterans." It is run by volunteers (most of whom are either Veterans themselves or the immediate family members of Veterans). Their office is located in the historic Putnam Library building on the VA campus and shares space with the Miami Valley Military History Museum. The AVHC is a recognized charitable organization and accepts donations to support their cause; more information about them can be found at www.americanveteransheritage.org.

The American Veterans Heritage Center

dollars on maintaining vacant buildings (or destroying them), these contracts allowed local organizations to lease the properties from the VA at low cost. This scenario was of benefit to both parties, as well as the Veterans who gained additional services by having these groups on campus. In 1979, Dayton VAMC had initiated the first Enhanced Use Lease in the nation with the opening of a child care center inside a turn-of-the-century barracks building. The success of that endeavor led to more in the years to come, including a credit union, transitional housing for homeless Veterans, and accommodations for low-income seniors.

Originally a barracks built in 1899, Building 401 has been the home of the Miami Valley Family Care Center since 1979. Recently renamed Lincoln Academy, this early childhood education and care center provides affordable services to local working families.

During this first decade of the new century, the AVHC successfully advocated for state and national recognition of the Dayton VAMC's historic significance. Once placement on the National Register was achieved, the group's diligent efforts during the following years resulted in an upgrade of the campus to National Historic Landmark status in 2012. With this designation, 1800's historian Frank Conover's vision came closer to reality. In an 1896 history of Dayton, he wrote of the Soldiers Home someday becoming a great national park devoted to the enjoyment of citizens in general *"when wars will no longer furnish crippled veterans and soldier graves."* Though the second part of his vision has yet to be realized, the former Dayton Soldiers Home is now recognized as a place where the public can come and experience how America created a national system for the care of Veterans that endures to this day.

Restoration of the Grotto

Near the end of his tenure at Dayton, Mr. Richardson, again with AVHC's help, secured funding to begin renovations on the historic Grotto. In the decades since its revival by Col. Spofford, funding and staffing shortages had allowed nature to reclaim it, and overgrowth obscured much of the features. It had been brought back to life briefly in the 1980's when some of the original stone walls were rebuilt and drainage issues addressed, but the resources required to pay for consistent tending and weed control had been scarce. Now, with money and a commitment for upkeep, the VA hired contractors who rebuilt the old stone walkways, steps and hillsides. They cleared away the overgrowth and planted the initial flower beds that would lead to a transformation yet to be imagined.

The historic grotto after renovations, featuring gardens planted by the Montgomery County Master Gardeners. Upper right: the overgrown Grotto before renovations. (photos: Tessa Kalman)

Technology Brings Convenience and Improved Access to VA Health Care

In 1978, the Veterans Administration became a pioneer in the use of electronic health records when it deployed a computer program called "VistA" in twenty medical centers across the country. Once implemented at all facilities, this program allowed VA hospitals to electronically store and share medical information easily. The VA was one of the first organizations in the nation to implement this type of technology.

By the early 2000's, more Veterans, especially the younger generation, owned personal computers and were using the internet. In response, the VA launched a web-based communication system called My Health*e*Vet, which helps Veterans manage their own health care by giving them access to their test results and appointment schedule, as well as the ability to renew prescriptions or communicate with their health care provider.

As the sophistication of internet communications improved, the next step in giving Veterans better access to care was the introduction of Telehealth technology in 2005. Telehealth appointments allow patients to engage with their providers via one-on-one video chat sessions, and can include consultations on cardiology, dermatology, GI, spinal cord injury, optometry, mental health, physical fitness and even chaplain services.

An example of technology improving access to care: patients can schedule diabetic eye screenings at a convenient clinic location and time, and a VA physician at the main hospital reviews the images and has results within a few days. (photo: Ray Kummer)

The Culture of Relationship-Based Care

Glenn A. Costie

Building Relationships—with the Community, Veterans, and Staff

When Glenn Costie arrived at the Dayton VA Medical Center in 2011 as the 21st Director to lead the historic campus, he brought with him a philosophy for engaging the community and creating dialogue between leadership and employees. Establishing a culture of trust and transparency was paramount, and where past Directors had built physical structures to meet the needs of the ever-changing Veteran population, Mr. Costie's aim was to build improved working relationships among its staff members. In turn, this would enhance their relationship to the most important component of the Medical Center—the Veteran patients—to achieve excellence in care.

Since 2009, the Veterans Health Administration has promoted a health care model known as the Patient Aligned Care Team. Each team is made up of a primary care provider, a nurse serving as the care manager, a clinical associate, and an administrative clerk, with additional members such as social workers, dietitians, pharmacists, or mental health practitioners brought in as needed. Each member of the team serves the same Veterans, and each team meets frequently to discuss a Veteran's medical needs and progress, ensuring a continuum of care while executing the Veteran's health plan.

This team model was a precursor to a change in culture implemented Medical Center-wide in 2011, called Relationship-Based Care. This concept is a model and guide to improving the quality of care, the safety of the health care environment, and the satisfaction of both patients and staff. The focus points are threefold: the relationship between staff and the Veterans/families they serve, the professional relationships among staff members themselves, and the relationship each staff member has with his or herself. Since the implementation of Relationship-Based Care, surveys have shown a significant upswing in both staff and patient satisfaction.

Veteran with his PACTeam

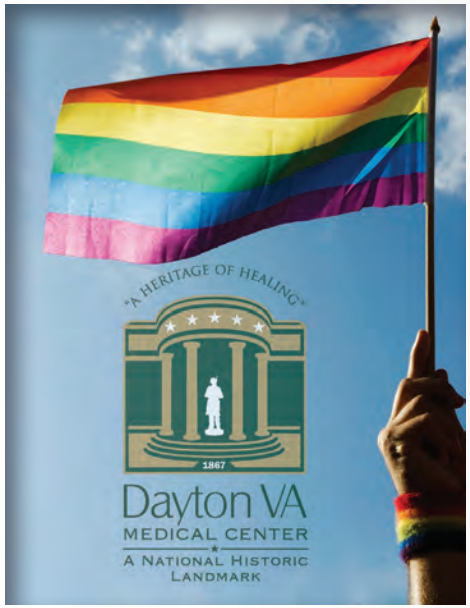
Veterans Advisory Council (photos: Ray Kummer)

The Medical Center's dedication to Relationship-Based Care was perhaps best embodied in the approach taken to generate feedback from the Veterans they serve. One of the initial sources for this information was the establishment of the Dayton Veterans Advisory Council in 2012. The council, made up of volunteer Veterans seeking insight into how to improve health care experiences for patients, provides honest feedback. They help set priorities, address issues, and establish accountability to the Veterans.

Addressing the Changing Demographics of the Military

The Women's Clinic wing, opened in 2012. (photo: Ray Kummer)

Consistently throughout its history, the Dayton VAMC has endeavored to stay in front of the changing nature of the U.S. Armed Forces and the Veterans who need care. Perhaps the largest change has come from the growing population of female Veterans. Recognizing the importance of providing specialized care to this growing population, the Dayton VAMC developed a specialized women's clinic. Originally just a single room in 1995, the Women's Clinic grew to have its own waiting area by February 2010—and by 2012, the Women's Clinic received a new 5,000 square foot wing with its own private entrance. In addition to primary care, mental health, and other services available to all enrolled Veterans, the Women's Clinic offers specialized services including PAP smears, breast exams, birth control, menopause screenings, and (through community providers at VA expense) maternity care.



The growth of the number of women serving in the military is not the only change the Dayton VAMC has embraced. The facility has also consistently received "Leader Status" (the highest possible award) from the Healthcare Equality Index for their treatment of LGBT Veterans. This recognition, awarded by the Human Rights Campaign, is based on four criteria: patient non-discrimination, equal visitation rights, employment non-discrimination, and training in specialized LGBT patient-centered care.

The Renaissance of the Healing Gardens

In 2012, members of the Ohio State University Extension of Montgomery County Master Gardener Volunteers began work to continue the revitalization of the grounds surrounding the Grotto, so it could once again be used as a place of healing, meditation, family outings (and even occasional weddings.) The beautiful gardens and landscaping resulting from their efforts were recognized by the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office, winning the 2014 Preservation Merit Award, and in 2016 the group was honored to receive the Chairman's Award from the American Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Inviting the public onto the VA grounds to experience the renewal of the once-famous Grotto Gardens strengthens the ties between the Medical Center and the community it serves, and pays homage to the legacy of the Civil War Veterans who built the Grotto.

Master Gardener Robert Neff at work in the Grotto, 2012.
(photos: Tessa Kalman)

Lewis B. Gunckel Memorial Fountain

Overview of the Grotto and Healing Gardens

Elizabeth Rohrer Memorial Butterfly Garden

Walkway through the upper Grotto

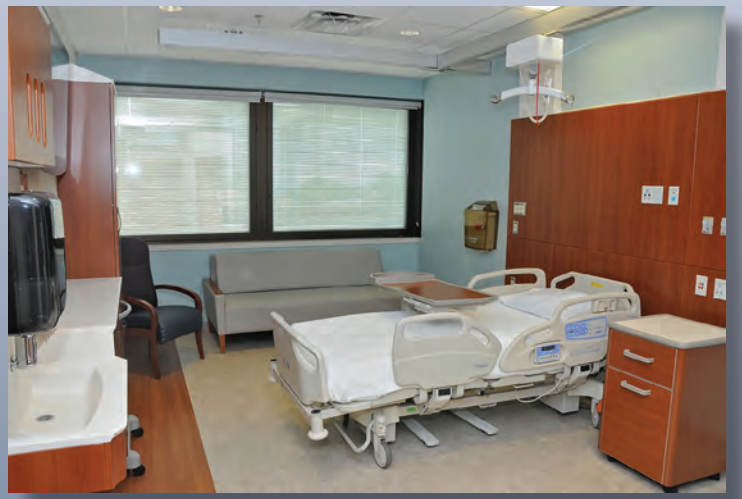
A "Victory" for Hospice, Memory Care, and Inpatient Rooms

Quiet sitting area for Hospice families. (All photos: Ray Kummer)

Since the opening of the Patient Tower, the Dayton VAMC had operated a hospice care unit for the care and comfort of Veterans reaching the end of their lives. In 2013, a dedicated hospice unit was added to the Community Living Center as a new "neighborhood." Just as the other CLC neighborhoods were given unique names, the new hospice was called "Victory Ridge" and offers compassionate end-of-life and palliative care for Veterans as well as comfort for their families facing this difficult time.

Two years later in the CLC, a new Memory Care wing was unveiled for Veterans with Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's disease, or other diagnoses that have impacted their cognitive functions. This unit assures dedicated care and safety for senior residents who may need the most assistance.

As renovations were being made for hospice care, the main hospital was undergoing upgrades to the medical/surgical wings to feature private patient rooms designed to provide Veterans with a sense of privacy, comfort, and respect. The suites are designed with the look and feel of an upscale hotel, so that patients can feel at ease during the healing and recovery process.



Left: Long-time Director of Hospice, Kathleen Hayes. Right: new Medical/Surgical inpatient room.

High Technology Meets Medical Education and Training

In June of 2015, the VA opened a state-of-the-art medical Simulation Center, designed to resemble a hospital floor featuring exam rooms, meeting rooms, nurse work stations and more. The site also has life-sized simulation robots with readable vital signs that are capable of generating sweat, blood, and other bodily functions. These advanced mannequins can engage in detailed, improvised conversations with health care staff as the mannequins are moved and voiced by humans conducting the training exercises from a control room. Through the combined use of simulators and human actors, exercises range from how to intubate a patient to managing unpredictable emergencies such as cardiac arrest or choking. Each training exercise is filmed through video cameras embedded in each room, so that medical staff and students can review and learn from what went right and wrong in each scenario.

The need for advanced, hands-on training is not limited to the Dayton facility. To address this need, a Mobile Simulation Lab was purchased so that many of the the same simulated training activities could be conducted at other VA Medical Centers and clinics in the region. Bringing this type of advanced medical training to the staff who need it is more convenient and cost-effective than having them leave their worksite to attend training elsewhere. Additionally, the training scenarios can be tailored to specific educational needs of the participants.

Increasing Communication and Veteran Input

In an effort to generate more input and buy-in from Veterans (and to increase accountability and transparency for the Medical Center staff as well), the Dayton VAMC began hosting quarterly Town Hall sessions in 2015, open to all Veterans to actively request their direct feedback. Based on their responses, this soon grew into quarterly, remotely-conducted "tele-Town Hall" sessions. During these, the Dayton VAMC leadership team and their staff would call more than 4,000 Veterans in a single night to ask for their feedback, answer questions, and cut through any red tape the Veteran had encountered. These quarterly tele-Town Hall sessions were such a success that they will increase to monthly sessions in 2018.

Long-Awaited Goals Are Finally Achieved

Thanks in part to embracing Enhanced Use Lease opportunities, the Department of Housing and Urban Development declared in November of 2016 that Veteran homelessness had effectively ended in Montgomery County. The Dayton VAMC and their community partners achieved this by repeatedly demonstrating their ability to house Veterans the same day as they were found to be homeless. This was a decade-long focus of the Dayton VAMC, the City of Dayton, Montgomery County, and many other partners to consistently and immediately give shelter to a Veteran in need, and then focus on the long-term treatment necessary to resolve the root causes of their homelessness. Thanks to this combined effort, Dayton became one of the first thirty cities in the country—and the first city in the state of Ohio—to effectively end Veteran homelessness.

Director Costie (on right) shows Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald the property leased by the Volunteers of America, used to combat Veteran homelessness. (photo: Ray Kummer)

Another long-anticipated goal was met in 2016 when, during a "fly-in" visit to Washington, D.C., local community partner Dayton Development Coalition successfully convinced Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald to establish a National VA History Center on the campus of the Dayton VA Medical Center.

Creating a historical center and archives dedicated to preserving and sharing the story of the American Veteran had long been a dream of history enthusiasts in the community and at the VA. For a long while, the project had support of leadership in Washington, however, making the official pronouncement—and sealing the deal—languished for years before becoming a reality. The selection process of the Dayton VAMC to host the History Center echoed the manner in which Dayton was selected for a Soldiers Home, one-hundred and fifty years before. In both cases, it was a reflection of the local community's efforts and dedication to honoring Veterans' sacrifices and legacy.

The original Headquarters Building will once again serve a similar function—as the main offices for the new National VA History Center. Also included will be a museum and educational center. Funding for restoration and conversion of the interior to accommodate staff, exhibit areas and lecture space will rely on fundraising and donations to see the project through to completion.

The building that once served as the Veterans' Clubhouse will house the archives collection for the History Center. Here, archivists will receive, restore, catalog and maintain the many historical artifacts and documents collected throughout the long history of the VA and its predecessors. (photos: Ray Kummer)

Caring for the Families of Veterans

A recent example of effective partnership has been the construction of a new Fisher House™ on the campus grounds. A local philanthropic family, the Gunlocks, donated over one million dollars towards the construction of a Fisher House™ for Veterans and their family members, with the provision that the local community would raise another half million dollars towards operating the home. From auctions to motorcycle rides to softball games and more, the community rose to the challenge and ultimately exceeded the goal, raising more than $600,000 to be used for the day-to-day operation of the Dayton VAMC Fisher House™ for years to come. The groundbreaking for this $6.5 million state-of-the-art, 16-bedroom facility took place in October of 2017, with a ribbon-cutting anticipated for 2018.

Artist's rendering of the planned FIsher House™ scheduled for opening in 2018.
(image: courtesy of Fisher House Foundation, Inc.)

A Fisher House™ is a home for Veterans and their family members to use, at no cost to them, while the Veteran receives care at a near-by medical facility. This saves family members from travelling long distances back and forth to the hospital or paying out of pocket for a hotel. At the Dayton VAMC, the Fisher House™ will also be available to the family members of Veterans in hospice care, allowing loved ones to be nearby as the Veteran reaches the end of life. The Fisher House™ Foundation donates the construction costs of the homes to VA Medical Centers across the country. After the house is opened, the VAMC is then responsible for its operation and for the care of Veterans and families staying there.

Dayton VAMC main hospital, 2017
(photo: Tessa Kalman)

The Path Forward

Recent years have brought many changes to the campus, allowing it to adopt new technologies and treatment philosophies in order to meet Veteran expectations and address the demographic realities of today. However, from the day the Dayton Soldiers Home first opened its doors to Civil War Veterans one-hundred and fifty years ago, its mission has never been forgotten.

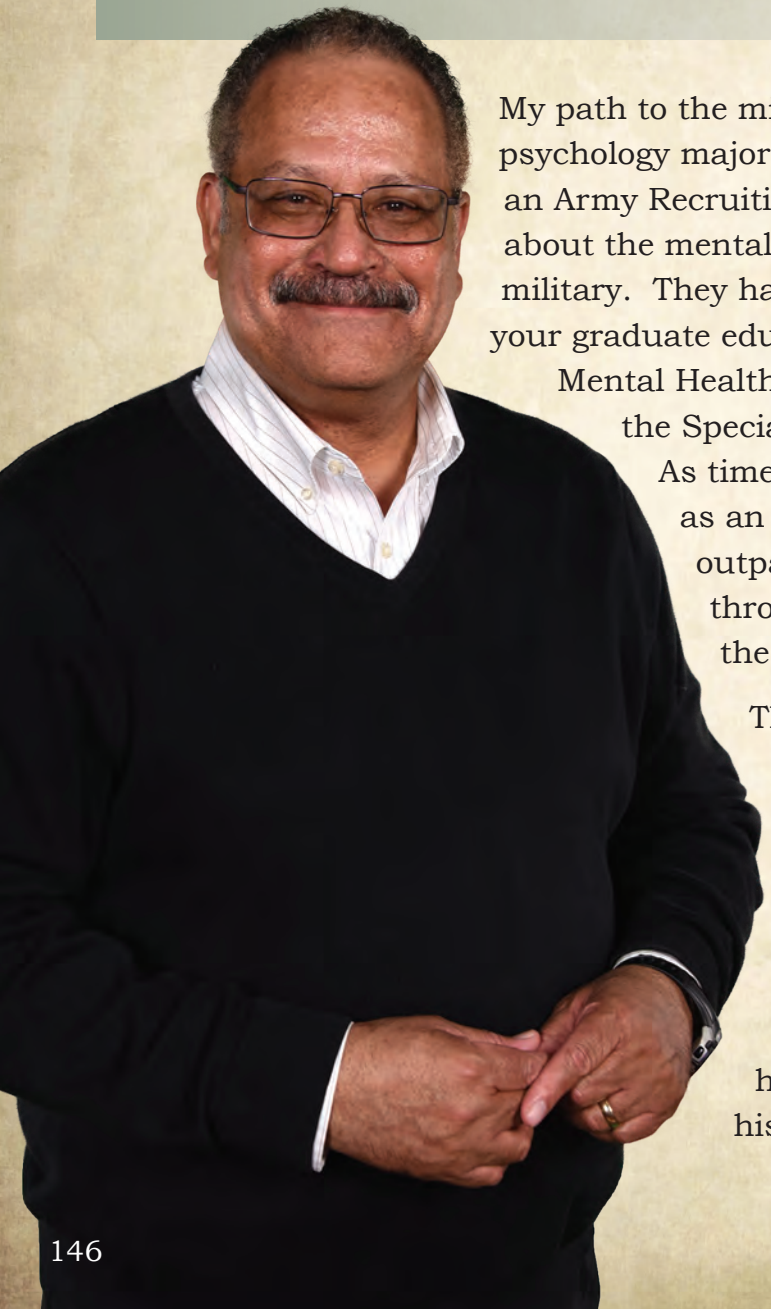
In these actions—rejuvenating the work of the Civil War Veterans, partnering with the community, increasing services, housing homeless Veterans, seeking Veteran feedback, and adapting to modern technology and societal trends—the Dayton VAMC continues to uphold the promise of President Abraham Lincoln:

"to care for him [and now, her]
who shall have borne the battle."

Our Veterans' Voices

William (Bill) Wall

U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, Iraq War Veteran



My path to the military began while I was a psychology major at Penn State. I went to an Army Recruiting Office where I learned about the mental health career field in the military. They had me at "we will pay for your graduate education." With my decision clearly made, I enlisted in the Army as a Mental Health Technician. I worked with the 82nd Airborne and various members of the Special Forces on the Inpatient Psychiatry Unit in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. As time went by, I was given an assignment back to Fort Sam Houston Texas as an instructor for mental health issues, psychology nursing, inpatient and outpatient mental health, and drug and alcohol programs. I worked my way through a Masters of Social Work, then made the switch from the Army to the Air Force and was selected as a direct comission.

The transition from Enlisted to Officer was a little strange, as was going from the Army to the Air Force. In my initial assignment to Vandenburg Air Force Base, my first weekend on base was disrupted when the Security Police (SP) picked me up and drove me to the Officers Club, where an apparent hostage situation was unfolding. I was told I needed to double time over to the SP's and help the tactical team with the negotiations. As the psychology advisor, I asked questions about the number of hostages in the building, the hostage takers, and if anyone had been killed? It was quiet for about a minute. The SP looked up from his sniper rifle and said, "Sir, you do know this is just an exercise, right?"

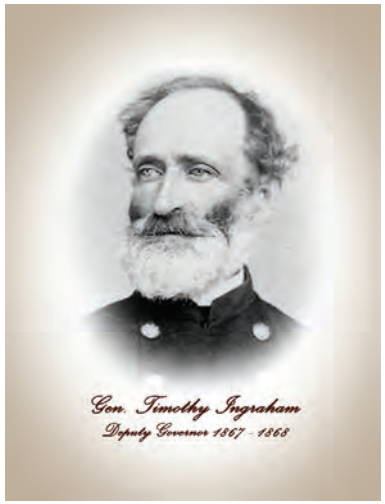
That incident made me realize the broader role my mental health training could play as a hostage negotiator and trainer in the Air Force. I was fortunate to work with the California State Patrol, Indiana State Police and other law enforcement agencies. During my assignment to the NAVCONBRIG in Charleston, South Carolina, I was privileged to attend their hostage negotiator training program sponsored by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. Working with various law enforcement agencies as a mental health officer afforded me access to their training venues, which included high speed maneuvering. I thought it seemed like a great way to spend a weekend—learning to drive at high speed, doing flip turns and practicing evasive driving. I feel that everything happens for a reason, and later I saw how things fit together to make the "crazy quilt of life" when I was deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom as a Combat Stress Team Commander. Due to my training, I was the best driver in our team. While I *could* have enjoyed the Commander seat in the back, "you lead from the front," and so I was the one who drove. After 15,000 km on the roads in a war zone where the enemy is trying to kill you, the training I received from my law enforcement colleagues resulted in our eight-person team all making it home safely.

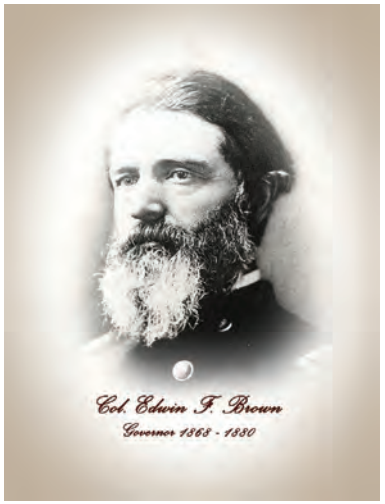
My first overseas assignment was with NATO at Geilenkirchen, Germany. I was again privileged to serve in multiple settings as I anchored an outpatient mental health clinic at the beginning of Operation Desert Storm. As the Gulf War kicked off, we worked extremely long hours and suspended regular appointments in order to offer walk-in services. These were primarily for family members whose loved ones had deployed overseas in Desert Storm.

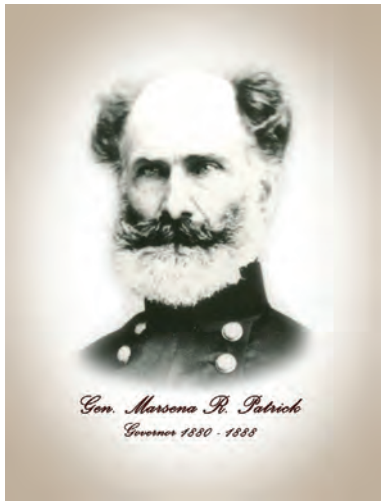
My wife is also an Army Veteran—she was working as an operating room technician at the time when we got married. She and my three children, now young adults, were with me for all thirty years of my service to the United States of America. My son Bobby is an Army Combat Engineer (see photo, opposite page). My passion for helping other soldiers and Veterans has had a direct influence on my life choices in many substantial ways. I have been thrilled to contribute to the awareness for mental health services for those who have served our great country.

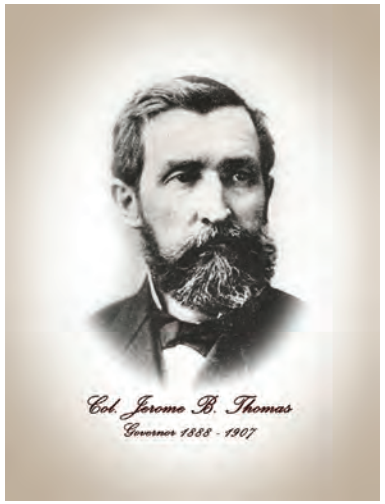
The Governors, Managers & Directors:

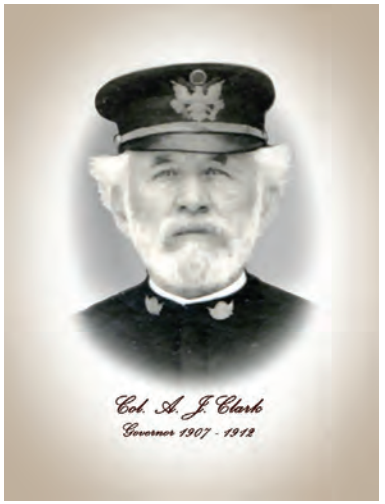
When the State Soldiers Home in Columbus, Ohio was transferred to the Central Branch of the National Homes, Major Edward E. Tracy was appointed Deputy Governor. However, war injuries led to his untimely death just a few months later, and General Ingraham took his place. No image of Maj. Tracy can be found. The title of Deputy Governor was changed to Governor with the next leader, Colonel Brown. Due to the very short terms of his predecessors, Col. Brown is regarded at the first true Governor of the Dayton Soldiers Home.

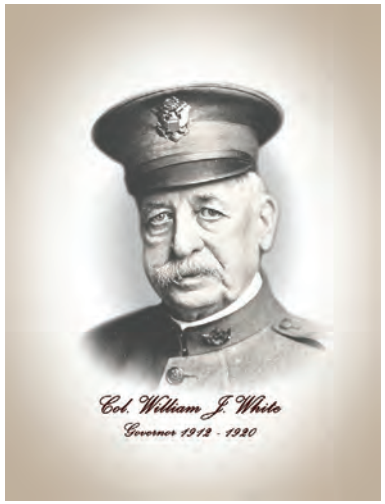


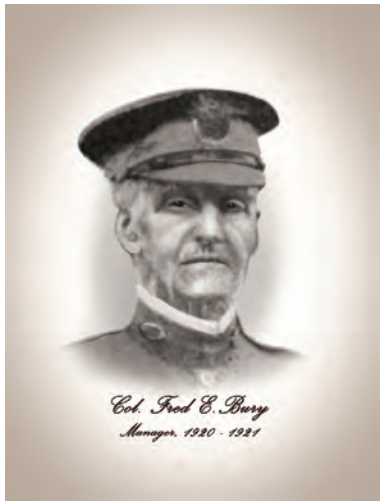






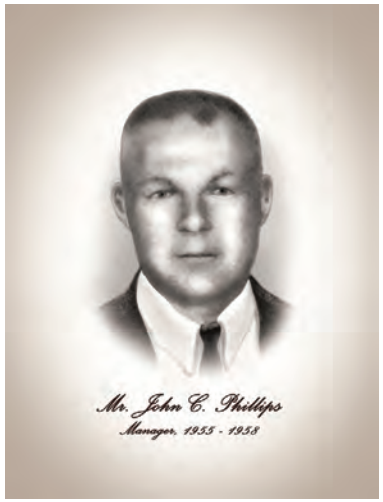


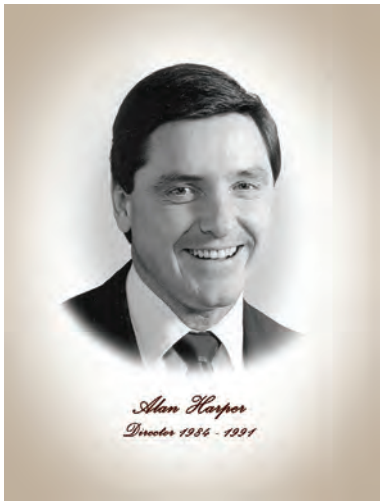




From Soldiers Home to Medical Center

Many of the official portraits of these leaders have been lost over time. Some images only exist in the form of newspaper articles or photocopied publications in the Dayton VAMC's archives. Color photography for Director's portraits did not begin until 1991. Temporary or "acting" appointees are not featured in this collection, although quite a few of them served, typically between the departures and arrivals of permanently appointed Managers/Directors.





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(All images are from the Dayton VA Medical Center Archives collecton, unless otherwise noted in the captions.)

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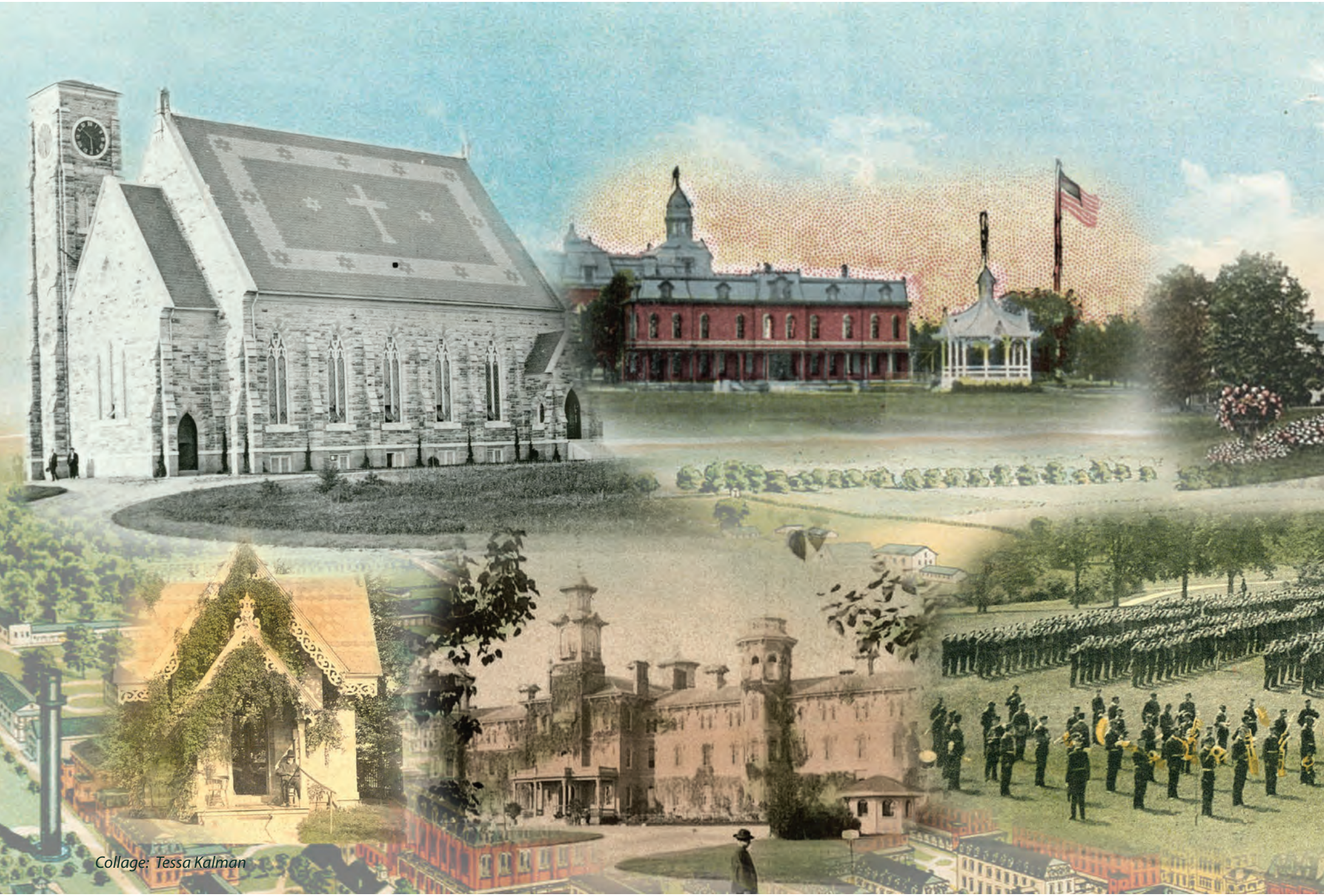
This compilation of 150 years of history required extensive research, and this was made possible by the invaluable contributions from Curt Dalton, (Dayton History)—thank you for your advice, expertise and insight; Nancy Horlacher and Bill McIntire (Dayton Metro Library)—access to the newspaper archive and the digitizing of articles brought our "middle years" of history to life. Thank you so much for your efforts and cooperation on this project.

Lastly, a thank you to our editor Lizbeth Jones for the many hours of reading copy, making edits, and being a voice of support and encouragement for this effort. The donation of your time and talent is a tribute to our Veterans' legacy.

~ *Tessa Kalman*
Visual Information Specialist & Historian
Dayton VA Medical Center



Collage: Tessa Kalman


1867 - 2017
150 Years
Dayton VA
MEDICAL CENTER
A National Historic
Landmark